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spare Rib

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'Little Girls': An Unsisterly Review
Dear *Spare Rib*,
As the publishers of Elena Gianini Belotti's 'Little Girls', we would like to thank *Spare Rib* and Gill Pinkerton for her review of the book (*Spare Rib* 41). We feel, however, that we must take issue with certain aspects of this review.

While criticizing Ms Belotti for not raising a number of questions which her book does not even set out to answer, Gill Pinkerton does not do justice to the issues which the book does raise. She mentions nothing of Ms Belotti's point that deep-rooted prejudices conspire to mould a child, even before he or she has emerged from the womb, into a pre-assigned sexual role.

Nor does she comment on Ms Belotti's description of the ways in which toys, games, and children's books are, perhaps unconsciously, used to prepare children for their future social and psychological functions. Finally, she says nothing about one of Ms Belotti's major points: that sexism will always prevail as long as men are excluded from child-rearing in the home and in nursery and primary school education.

The significance of 'Little Girls' lies in its approach. It is not an intellectual survey, nor an analytic project carried out by a small feminist group. It is a book written by a woman, who for the last fifteen years, has been directly and professionally involved with children, their parents and teachers. The material is presented in an immediate, often anecdotal, fashion, while the analysis grows out of the experience recounted.

The tone of Gill Pinkerton's review is one that suggests that she is privy to some special knowledge which is not available to the mass of her sisterhood, especially of the Italian variety. Certainly, the women's movement should be capable of a solidarity which transcends intellectual as well as national frontiers.

There are so few books on the market today which speak in a direct and practical way to a wide sector of the population, perhaps uninitiated in the goals and methods of feminism, that one would expect a little more sisterly enthusiasm for a book which does do just this.
Sian Williams
Lisa Appignanesi
pp Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative
London NW5

Why Such a Pathetic Poster?
Dear Sisters,
I know your Christmas poster is nearly seventy years old, but why choose such a pathetic one? We should have learnt by now that 'Justice' is a man and he is not giving away any power no matter how much gentle whining that "it's only fair".

We won't have all our demands until we win the war and to win that we'll have to be stronger and fight dirtier. Femininity as depicted on that poster should be buried along with it. Having that for Christmas wouldn't exactly incite one to the front line.
Janet Kirwan
London NW5
We chose the poster 'Justice Demands The Vote' because it illustrated the real aspirations *of the reformist pre-War suffrage movement in this country. Further, a knowledge of the limitations of its appeal to humanitarianism and its acceptance of the existing social framework can help feminists now to formulate alternative demands and strategies. If we dismiss propaganda as 'pathetic' then we are making the mistake of assessing historical movements solely on the basis of what we know now. Judgement then cannot be historical but merely moral and abstract.*

Trying To Undeceive
Dear *Spare Rib*,
"Without the proof women gave in World War 1 that they could make a contribution to the war effort it is doubtful that they would have received the vote", says Paula Harper ('Suffrage Posters', *Spare Rib* 41).

The fact that our industrial production had depended largely on working class women since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution had escaped middle class politicians. Only when women of their own class did "war work" were they impressed, though such work was often genteel and the main productive effort still came from the working class, who were of course the last to be enfranchised.

This picture of a grateful nation deciding that women deserved the vote because of good conduct during War was the one favoured by politicians. It served to belittle the Suffrage Campaign while making women think that being "good' in future was the way to get injustices removed, rather than using the forces at their disposal.

When I was a young man (before the Civil War) I met many young women who had been thus deceived by politicians. I spent much time trying to undeceive them (unlike most of my contemporaries).
Love
David Rosewarne
London E18

*Letters in response to Jean McCrindle's recollections of her work as a London probation officer in the 1960s (*Spare Rib *41). Defining her role as that of a financial officer, she described court procedures, magistrates' attitudes to psychiatric and money difficulties, her relations with the police and the lives of her women probationers. "If you are in any way concerned about your probationer you simply have to deny the role you are put in", she wrote.*

No Place for Lady Bountifuls
Dear Editors,
What a pity that your article on a probation officer's work should be so outdated and so atypical. Since the Sixties most Services have decentralised and officers work as social workers in the areas where their clients live. A higher proportion of staff have the Certificate of Qualification in Social Work and methods have changed vastly. Apparently Jean McCrindle is ignorant of Day Centres, Community Service Orders, group work, family therapy, community work, and matrimonial counselling, all of which probation officers are involved in.

In focussing her article around the Magistrates' Court (seemingly with a stipendiary sitting, as most are lay persons) only a narrow view of the work is given. Probation officers also work with clients (of either sex, not women alone) appearing in the Crown Courts, some on grave charges, in the Domestic Courts and County Courts. In matters concerning the custody of children they act as Divorce Court welfare officers and supply reports which are crucial to the future of children.

Also they are heavily involved in schemes to assist children in trouble in the Juvenile Courts. A great deal of the work involves helping those not only placed on probation, but also those sent to Detention Centres, borstals and prisons, and especially offering assistance on their release. Some choose to work 'inside' as prison welfare officers.

Obviously this is not an easy job working in the imperfect setting of the Courts and legal system, with an imperfect penal system, and there are frustrations. But probation officers are not perfect themselves and Jean McCrindle might have found that more training and experience would have helped her to develop some of the skills required.

I believe it is possible to have authority and befriend people, but it would seem that she expected to get something out of the relationship for herself. The Probation and Aftercare Service is no place for those who want easy rewards, not is it a place for Lady Bountifuls. It does need astute, energetic persons with a carefully placed sense of commitment, who can give some of their personal resources to those persons of equal status who come before the courts.

I cannot agree with Jean McCrindle's assumption that the greatest difficulty is the probation officer's authority role. Far more significant is the issue of social control and the use to which social agencies are put in this complex society. In the political spectrum probation officers probably see themselves as of the 'liberal/ reformist' ilk, and the legal system is of course one of the means by which society exerts power over individual members. Despite these constraints the probation officer retains a unique freedom to achieve social change. I would not like to think that Jean McCrindle's despairing and embittered article has deterred any potential recruits amongst readers of *Spare Rib*.
Val Airey
Probation Officer
Birmingham

Outdated and Inaccurate
*Dear *Spare Rib*,
I'm a probation officer in London, and was pleased to see an article on our work. However, I was dismayed when I read it. Its 'feel' is all wrong. I would attribute this to several things:
1) It is hoplessly outdated and frequently inaccurate (eg 'there is no other remand home for girls in London').
2) The writer appears to have worked not as a probation officer at all (all of whom are trained, whatever the merits or demerits of that) but as a temporary probation officer, which was a very different job with different orientation and responsibilities. This post has been replaced by 'ancillary workers'. The idea of both is to relieve officers of routine work or work which can be done by 'untrained' workers, (such as court work, as we see from the article) and provide pre-training experience.
3) The writer's own confusion.
4) The basically anecdotal nature of the article, which leaves a bitty impression and confuses whatever points she is trying to make.

We do work in the courts and derive our work and raison d'etre from the court. However I spend an average of half a day a week in court. 'Good relations with the police' are irrelevant. The information etc. mentioned in the article is provided as a routine procedure. Incidentally, the police do far worse things than perpetuate racial discrimination, but that is outside the scope of this letter.

Appearances in court and attendant publicity can exacerbate people's problems – but in fairness, it does sometimes give them access to help. Many magistrates are unsympathetic and biased against the social work or psychiatric perspective. But it is hard to generalise and many are also equally naive and optimistic about what social work or psychiatric help does and can achieve. The judiciary (we deal with higher courts too) are a mixed bunch and there are daily horror stories but it is impossible to generalise about their attitudes to us or our clients. This is not to suggest that I, or my colleagues in my experience, are complacent or 'obsequious'.

Her comments on her role with clients are equally confused. Is asking someone how a job's going a denial of interest in them as a person? Is being used 'purely as a social service' bad or important? Is 'getting them money and keeping them out of scrapes with the law' irrelevant? She speaks of her 'great emotional involvement' –

was this not important in any way to her clients? Her description actually misunderstands the concept of 'controlled emotional involvement'. How would it feel to be hysterical and have someone respond with their own hysteria? It is simply a recognition of the need for your involvement with the client to be directed towards their needs, not your own. This can be problematic but not in any way that Jean McCrindle has made explicit.
Yours sincerely
E A Wareham (Mrs)
Probation Officer
London NW3
(The views expressed are my own and not necessarily those of the Probation & After-Care Service.)

A Complete Picture of Myself
Dear *Spare Rib*,
As a social worker of only 16 months standing, and one who, during the course of my work, has quite consistent contact with, mainly, Juvenile Courts, and, in the past, Magistrates Courts, I would like to offer a word of appreciation regarding Jean McCrindle's article.

Many of the points and issues that are raised by Jean McCrindle have my complete and utter support and sympathy. Her article left me with a complete picture of myself as a rather apathetic and subservient male social worker.

I only wish I had the courage of my convictions as she had in respect of the 17 year old girl on remand in Holloway. Many have been the times when I have considered possible injustices and anti-feelings against the less able and more vulnerable of our society. And many have been the times when I have placated the 'client' with soft, meaningless, social work expressions. There have also existed many situations where I have been so angered and appalled that I have considered courses of action that Jean McCrindle so courageously took, but because of my apathy and because loyalty to 'professionalism' have knocked at my unconscious I have crept back into my shell.

After reading this article there is hope.
Yours sincerely
Brian Cheeseman
Oxford

*Indicates that the letter has been cut for space reasons.

Puerto Rico: Real Victims?

Dear *Spare Rib*,
In reference to the article on Puerto Rico in your September issue ('35 Percent Of Women Of Childbearing Age Sterilized'), I think a few things should be put straight.

Speaking as a native New Yorker I will tell you that no one has ever forced the Puerto Rican nationals to emigrate to the United States. It is well known to them all that they can make a better living off of the welfare benefits in places like New York City than by actually working. I know personally of people who manage to collect welfare checks under as many as five different names, and frequently have jobs on the side as well.

Now you may say that they are victims of the imperialistic capitalistic exploitative United States. But if you ask me, and anyone who has had to see the population of his/her native city switch within ten years from English-speaking to Spanish-speaking, you will know who the real victims are, the suckers who pay the outrageous New York City taxes.

Also there is nothing more worthy of a Puerto Rican woman's complaints than their men who cannot stand to let any female pass by on the street without saying 'Mira mira' and then muttering obscenities in Spanish.

So get your ideas straight. It's easy for you to support this rubbish from a safe distance of 3,000 miles, but if you had to live with them, you'd say, as I and many other Americans do, 'PUERTO RICO LIBRE!'

They can have it!
Dianne Radley
London SW19

Lynn di Pietro replies for the Puerto Rican Independence Committee:
To clear up the matter of 'safe distance', I am a native Philadelphian, and have spent three years working as a welfare case worker in the Puerto Rican area of my city.

I, too, know of people, including Puerto Ricans, guilty of welfare fraud. These are a small minority and hardly relevant to the issue.

Your letter is a perfect example of the racism a Puerto Rican faces on the mainland. You have a right to feel angry about high taxes, not to mention the crime and violence resulting from social conditions in the inner city. But you are directing your anger at the victim rather than the cause.

While you provide no facts to dispute the argument – that migration and sterilization are the US Government's answer to the social and economic crisis created by their own policy in Puerto Rico – you state that no one has forced Puerto Ricans to emigrate to US cities. This depends on your definition of 'forced'. I do consider 30% unemployment, grossly inadequate welfare payments, and wage levels 33% lower than on the mainland (with a cost of living higher than in New York) a real form of compulsion.

The fact that in some cases Puerto Ricans can make a better living off welfare in New York than working in Puerto Rico is a reflection of these conditions. The majority of New York Puerto Ricans, though, are employed – employed in the most menial and low-paying jobs – and are themselves tax payers.

So get your facts straight. Read about Puerto Rico. Two worthwhile books are 'Puerto Rico, A Socio-Historical Explanation' by Manuel Maldonado Denis, and 'Puerto Rico and Puerto Ricans', a series of essays edited by James Petras and Adalberto Lopez. Then formulate your ideas and I think you will continue to say 'Puerto Rico Libre!', but with a different emphasis.

Abortion: Unjustified Repression?
Dear *Spare Rib*,
I am both a Christian and a Women's Liberationist. I have severe doubts as to whether abortion is ever right, on the grounds that the foetus, while not being able to survive outside the womb may already possess a human individuality or soul. However, I feel that nobody has a right to be dogmatic about this, as such a theory cannot be proven or disproven by scientific means.

However, it seems to me wrong that a doctor, whose view should be that purely of a scientific assessing the mental and physical health of the woman, or any other professional person, should presume to make a decision about abortion which the woman herself is not permitted to make. I therefore support 'A Woman's Right To Choose'.

However, many people believe very strongly that to destroy the *potential human life* of the foetus is murder, as did the South London vicar mentioned in *Spare Rib* 39 ('South London Curate: "I think I know the mind of God" '). He therefore put up a poster *not* connected with the James White Abortion (Amendment) Bill, to persuade women considering an abortion not to have one.

For people of an opposite view to demonstrate, or to stick up posters in an attempt to persuade others to adopt their opinion, is equally reasonable but it seems to me unjustified *political* repression to remove or paint over the poster.

I am sure that the women who did this would resent their own propaganda being supressed, and are against censorship in any form, and thus violate their principles in acting in this way.

To exercise censorship on the grounds that material might cause mental suffering would mean that all news of wars, disasters, and poverty and deprivation abroad and in Britain would also have to be suppressed.

I should feel bitterly ashamed if the Women's Liberation Movement were to adopt such repressive and inconsistent tactics regularly.
Yours in love and sisterhood
Lucy Arnold
London N10

Rita Craft replies for SE London National Abortion Campaign:
Lucy Arnold is right, of course; the vicar is entitled to his opinion that 'Abortion Is Murder'. But by advertising it as he did, he was not acting privately but as a representative of a powerful and respected organ of the State – the Church of England.

Unlike national and international news of wars and disasters etc, abortion is a personal issue, and the church poster was an unwarranted intrusion into a woman's private dilemma. Our concern was for its effect on the mythical lady on the 21 bus, who not only does not command the same resources to publicise her opinion, but has not been involved in the debate that led to the institutional proclamation. We were anxious to speak for her and demonstrate that there was an alternative point of view.

Despite several polite letters to the vicar, he made us wait for nearly two months before seeing us. We wrote to the Bishop of Kingston who instantly suggested alternative wording to the vicar, but nothing happened. While there was no public knowledge of these letters, or the proposal for modification, the unsubstantiated church statement remained publicly unchallenged. It was then that it was painted out.

In this instance, we are not repentant about the militancy, since we feel that in future the vicar will probably think twice before advertising insensitive and destructive opinions. Incidentally, he was not quoting official Anglican doctrine ("Abortion – An Ethical Discussion", published by Church of England Church Assembly Board for Social Responsibility, 1965), and he *did* know of the Abortion (Amendment) Bill – "I hope that this poster will remain until after the vote in Parliament", (*South London Mercury* 19 June 75).



SHORTLIST

Please send information to Jill Nicholls, Shortlist, *Spare Rib*, 9 Newburgh St, London W1A 4XS.

events

** Events are listed chronologically*

Playing and Learning
A soft play space is on show at the Design Centre – floors and walls padded with thick foam for all child visitors to bounce on. Also toys for handicapped children and 'creative play' toys from the London College of Furniture. From January 6 – February 28 at the Design Centre, 28 Haymarket, London SW1Y 45U (01-839 8000).

Abortion Rights
Conference at the Friends Meeting House, Euston Rd, London NW1 on January 17. Details from the Abortion Law Reform Association (alias A Woman's Right To Choose), 88a Islington High St, London NW1 (01-359 5209).

Edinburgh Conference
There's a one-day conference on January 24 to discuss the women's movement in Edinburgh. In London Street School, registration at 9.30 am – 75p or 25p – creche available, social in the evening at 20 Stamley Road. Contact Edinburgh women's group on 031-556 5655.

Planning for Newcastle
The next national women's liberation conference is in Newcastle at Easter. The main theme will be the future of the women's movement in Britain. The next meeting to plan for it is on January 31, 1 – 5pm. Ring Rosie, 0632-812 266, if you want to go – representatives from all areas welcome: creche, accommodation and social provided.

If you're writing a paper, interested in having a display stand, taking part in cultural activities or helping with the creche, or have any suggestions, contact Newcastle women's liberation group, 46 Simonside Terrace, Newcastle 6.

Unemployment
A Claimants Union workshop on *Unemployment and the Fight to Live*, January 31, City of London Poly, Fairholt House, London E1. Contact Julia Mainwaring 01-790 4672.

Gay Social Workers
The Gay Social Workers and Probation Officers group is meeting in London on February 1 at 7.30. Phone Cheryl on 01-555 6000 or Mike 01-226 1354 for details.

Bristol Socialist Women
A new group meeting every second Wednesday at Bristol Polytechnic, Unity St (off Park St) in Room U16 at 7.30. On February 4 they are discussing *Why a Socialist Women's Movement?*

Contraception and Abortion
The Women's Abortion and Contraception Campaign is holding a one-day conference called *Contraception and Abortion: Women Talking*. A chance for women to exchange information and experiences. February 7 in the Folk House, Park St, Bristol 1. Contact Bristol Women's Centre, 59 Lower Union St, Bristol 1 for details.

New Laws for Women
Conference on February 14 – 15 on *New Laws for Women's Rights*, held at the Polytechnic of Central London in association with the NCCL. This practical course on the Sex Discrimination Act and the Equal Pay Act and their implementation will be divided into two parts: 1) how the acts should be implemented in the field of employment; 2) how they should operate in other areas eg property rights, mortgages, education and training. Various aspects will be examined by reference to case studies and through mock tribunals, as well as in lectures (main speakers Patricia Hewitt, general secretary of NCCL, and Tess Gill). Further details from Netta Swallow, Short Course Unit, PCL, 309 Regent St, London, W1 (01-580 2020 Ex 221).

Gay Working People
The Gay Working People's Conference is on February 14 – 15 in Leeds Polytechnic. Creche provided. Details from the Gay Information Centre, 153a Woodhouse Lane, Leeds 2.

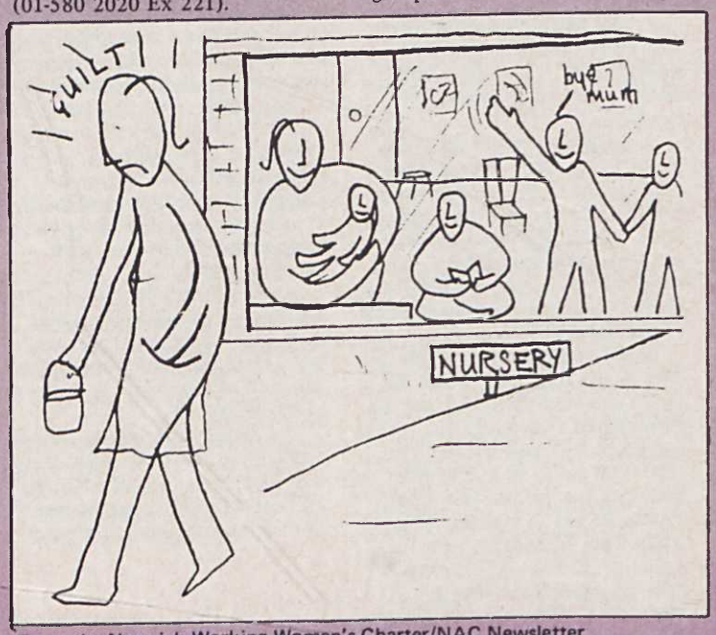
Brave New World
Women in Media are organising a working conference on the meaning to women of the Sex Discrimination Act – how is it likely to affect us in practice? How can it be made to work?

The main areas of discussion will be: Women and Education, Women and Employment, Women in the Home, What is the Commission?, What's missing?, Alternatives to the Two Job Life. Any other suggestions to Women in Media, Flat 10, 59 Drayton Gdns, London SW10. The conference – *A Brave New World for Women* – is in Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1, on February 21, 10 – 5. Entrance £3 including food and creche.

Lesbian Conference
The next national lesbian conference is on February 28 – 29 in Bristol. Contact Bristol Women's Centre, 59 Lower Union St, Bristol 1 for details.

campaigns

Abortion Campaign
The National Abortion Campaign has moved its office to 30 Camden Rd, London N1 9DP (01-485 4303). They can provide addresses for the 85 NAC groups around the country and arrange speakers for meetings. Newsletters sent out roughly every 2 weeks now cost £2 a year for individuals, £3 for groups.



From the Norwich Working Women's Charter/NAC Newsletter

A Woman's Right to Choose has moved its office to 88a Islington High St, London NW1 (01-359 5209). Don't ring before 11 am. It's desperately short of money, so please subscribe if you can, £2.50 a year. Its 5p leaflet *How Much Choice Do We Have?* sums up the situation so far, and can be sold while petitioning. Postcards also available at 5p each or £3 for 100.

projects

Social Services
Brighton women's liberation are trying to set up a project on how social services, education and health (including psychiatry) affect women locally. First they're trying to find out about housing, public and private – are women being actively discriminated against in Brighton? If you have any suggestions or information that might be relevant – even to other areas – contact Lynda Birke, 15 Comelford St, Brighton, Sussex BN2 1TQ.

Upstairs Room
A woman in the movement has opened up a new disco at the Festival Inn, Dorset Rd, London SW8, nearest tube Vauxhall. Entrance is at the door marked "Upstairs Room". The discos are Sundays from 7.30, entry 20p. Sunday lunchtime the Upstairs Room is available for women drinkers, 12 – 2. On Fridays it's planned to have feminist entertainment evenings, with women singers etc

For details of weekly happenings at the Upstairs Room, contact the Women's Liberation Workshop, 38 Earlham St, London WC2 (01-836 6081), or get full details in the workshop newsletter, weekly, price 15p.

Children in Squats
A woman has written a reader for children who don't live in middle class houses in the country. It's about Sally Squatter, her brother and sisters and the bailiffs. She'd like illustrations for it from children who live in squats or tenements. Please send pictures to Doshin, "Meadow View", Henley Lane, Kingsdown, Box, Wilts.

films

Working Mothers
In this series of short Canadian films women talk about their lives and work. I was most struck by *Would I Ever Like To Work.* A worn-out Irishwoman with seven children talks about surviving on welfare. If she could get the kids into a nursery, she'd rather work as a waitress than be stuck in the flat with them all day. One calls her while she's being interviewed and she turns her head, showing the strain – "I can't cope with kids." She was married at 16 when her boyfriend was 19, and had a baby every year till they broke up. He used to beat her and broke the first baby's arm when it was three weeks old. She tells of her struggle to get sterilised – at 23 she was told she was too young, despite all the children and the hole in her heart. All this is made more painful by the interviewer's clumsy questions: "Would you like to work?" "Would you make different choices if you had your time again?"

Some of the films could be useful for women's groups. In *Mothers Are People* a Jamaican

scientist talks about the lack of daycare facilities in Canada. In *Like The Trees* a Metis woman explains how, after suffering for years from the pressures of white Western society, she is trying to return to the traditional culture: "You could say I've gotten out of society and I'm just being myself. Like the trees, we belong here."

All in 16mm colour, each approximately 14 minutes long. Available for hire for £3 each from Concord Films, Nacton, Ipswich, Suffolk IPIP 0J2.

centres

Wages for Housework
Women in the Wages for Housework campaign have opened a centre at 129 Drummond St, London NW1 (01-387 3550). It's open Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday, 12.30 – 6.30. Open meetings on a variety of topics every other Wednesday.

Essex Road
Essex Road Women's Centre, 108a Essex Road, London N1 (01-226 9936) is now open Mondays, 3 – 6.30, mainly for women's health – pregnancy testing (20p), information on VD, contraception, abortion, etc. Any information about women's health gratefully received.

plays

Charter in the Streets
Haringey Street Theatre Group have a play to offer about the Working Women's Charter. Available evenings and weekends. Expenses only. Phone 01-888 2610 evenings.

IWY Show
This short play, full of songs, shows what we were offered in International Women's Year – the Equal Pay Act and all its loopholes, the Law Lords' ruling on rape. And it shows how women are fighting back – against amendments to the 1967 Abortion Act, against cuts in nursery education, against redundancies.

30 minutes long. Available from Broadside Mobile Workers' Theatre, 58 Holbein House, Holbein Place, London SW1N 8NJ (01-730 5396 or 01-691 3702).

pamphlets

Women Together
A women's paper for the Middlesex area. The November issue was the third, and excellent, with short informative articles from local groups working on nurseries, the Finer report, abortion and gay oppression. It also lists family planning clinics, women's groups and contacts in the area.

Women producing it would welcome support and contributions – magazine meetings are held in Central Harrow; ring Gill, Ruislip 72345, to find out when. To take out a subscription send 60p plus 30p postage to *Women Together*, 57 Warham Rd, Harrow Weald, Middlesex. A single issue costs 10p.



The Land: the four women with work in this massive exhibition of landscape photography, at the Victoria and Albert Museum until February 15, are Margaret Bourke-White, [redacted] Fay Godwin and Sally Greenhill (who works with her husband, Richard).

Lange's "Power farming displaces tenants, Tractored Out" (*above*) stands alone as the only picture making any social comment. The land may be an unlikely place for this, but not seen through the eyes of someone who said: "The world is full of beautiful photographs, but to be beautiful, photographs must be full of the world."

The pictures, selected by the influential British photographer Bill Brandt, include beauties from Cartier-Bresson, (Brie, France), Lartigue, ("Un oeil qui regarde le Bois de Boulogne"), Ernst Haas and the trickster, Jerry N. Uelsmann. There is even a photograph taken by Doug Scott from the summit of Everest last September.

Valerie Wilmer

The Land can also be seen at: National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh, March 6 – April 11; Ulster Museum, Belfast, April 24 – June 6; National Museum of Wales, Cardiff, June 19 – August 1.

Radical Science Journal
Shameful apology to RSJ Collective for failing to review their special double issue (2/3) when it arrived three months ago. Feminists will be interested in Sheila Young's 'Politics of Abortion', an account of NHS abortion as a case of the structural oppression of women by the medical profession. Although written a couple of years before the recent threat to the 1967 Abortion Act the article has a political immediacy. Within the National Abortion Campaign discussions on what we are fighting *for* as distinct from the rights we must defend would be informed by a reading of this piece.

This double issue is 152pp, 60p. Annual subscription (three issues) £1.40. Available from 9 Poland St, London W1.

Ann Scott

WWC newsletter NAC
Women in Norwich brought out this newsletter for their local NAC week of action in the autumn, and also for the Charter group and its nursery campaign. The aim is to show the connections between the campaigns and to give more information about conditions in Norfolk. Copies from NAC, 18 Havelock Rd, Norwich (611003) or WWC, 71a Park Lane, Norwich.

Gay Left
2,000 copies of the first issue of *Gay Left: a socialist journal produced by gay men* have recently been published. The sub-title is not, however, static, and the collective would welcome both articles about lesbianism and a dialogue with women's groups.

The *Gay Left* collective comprises a lecturer, research librarian, potter, sociology student, art student, infant teacher and two further education teachers. The journal's collective statement occupied the group for five months after meetings began last March. Reading it you can feel the care and the caution that went into it.

I read *Gay Left* non-stop but thought it a bit dull visually: there are no pictures and I think the columns are too wide for persistent concentration. But the articles are immensely varied . . . Coming Out Politically, Gays in Cuba, Where Engels Feared To Tread, CHE in Close-up ("Integration rather than rebellion is the message of the Campaign for Homosexual Equality") and a much wittier report of the Leeds Gay Workers conference than *Spare Rib* 37's.

40p incl. postage from *Gay Left*, 36a Craven Rd, London W2.

Ann Scott

Poetry: The East is Red
Four collections this month, all by women living in the East End. They're all cheap and all produced by the small presses valiantly attempting to break the stranglehold of the large commercial publishers, or as in Julia Harders' case, duplicated and published by the poet herself.

Bedwritten is by Debbie Carnegie, published by the Basement Writers, Town Hall, Cable St, London E1, price 15p + p&p. Short, humorous poems plus occasional sad or ironic ones.

Breaking Through is by Gladys McGee, also published by the Basement Writers, same price. Moving poems about politics, families and feelings, always connected by her wryly expressed socialism, plus two tough poems by her daughter Kim.

Moments of Madness is by Terry Galdes, published by Reality Press, Stepney, price 15p + p&p. Order it from Compendium, 240 Camden High St, London NW1.

Brave New Island is a collection of drawings and poems by Julia Harders, available from her at 15 Bective Rd, Forest Gate, London E7, price 25p + p&p.

In all these collections, an autobiographical introduction puts the poems into the context of the author's life, emotions and feminist perspective.

Michele Roberts

HELP



The Damsel in Distress is a potent myth. A wilting woman cries pitifully for help. A strong, fearless knight gallops up, scoops her to safety and carries her off into his chosen sunset. It confirms the idea that help-seeking is a weak, passive act with woman as the recipient abandoning herself to a strong, self-reliant saviour.

The myth is of course a simplification of reality, but it does illustrate predominant types of behaviour open to a girl growing up today. Story books encourage her to be a passive princess, but experiencing the demoralising, crippling character of the role, she will often react against it. And the only way she can see out of wilting womanhood is to adopt the knightly role – arrogant self-reliance and lonely, competitive individualism.

As she grows up she comes face to face with the contradiction that women's help-seeking and displays of distress are only tolerated up to a certain point. Once married the tables are turned. Suddenly she's expected to provide love, support and service: "I had to pull myself together and keep out of hospital," says Jean, interviewed in our article, "I couldn't have the kids in care again," she continues, describing her determination not to go back into mental hospital.

The Women's Movement is exposing these contradictory, damaging expectations and experiences. Feminism has given women new possibilities and new ways of seeing ourselves as a powerful force. This can also mean new pressures. Although the Women's Movement stresses solidarity as the basis of collective strength, we are liable to interpret these ideas through the filter of society's ideals of individual strength. We set up as our internal ideal a female counterpart to the steely-eyed, self-sufficient knight. Along with the rest of society, we see help-seeking as failure, a defeat, instead of a potentially positive admission of interdependence and the first step on the way to change.

So how does a woman in this society of competing value systems meet the moment of being unable to cope and the realisation that she needs help? She feels ashamed, self-hating. Or she feels angry at having never received the help she grew up to expect. Or she feels relief at finally abandoning the struggle for an impossible ideal of self-sufficiency.

With this issue we begin a series of articles which will explore the myths and realities of help-seeking. Women will be describing their feelings and needs, and explaining whether these needs were met by the people and institutions they turned to. In the first article, five women look back at coming through mental hospital.

What conditions and attitudes define how help is *given*? To those shaped within the dominant ethic of competitive individualism, a person who is obviously *not* "making it alone" embodies their deepest fears of failure – a vision of need from which to escape.

This ethic permeates the help-giving professions. Even there help-seeking is not *admired*. It is at best tolerated. Society as a whole esteems the "strong, self-sufficient" individual and despises the "weak, dependent" one. This moralism breeds a power relationship between helper and helped.

The interviews with women about mental hospitals on pp 30-36, show the institutionalised gap between the help-seeker and the help-giver at its most hierarchical and most destructive. The power of the helper rose as that of the helped fell. The helper was self-satisfied and the helped demoralised. The women felt blamed and were made to feel guilty for needing help.

To get help at all people have to show themselves to be utterly distraught – prepared to relinquish control of their lives. This is particularly true for women. Because displays of distress are to some extent expected – and sanctioned – in women, they have to cry that much louder to be taken seriously.

There is another attitude to help-seeking, which is equally demoralising. Instead of being made to feel guilty, someone who looks for help may be treated as a helpless victim of circumstances who can take no responsibility for herself; she cannot be trusted to take steps to help herself. The helper takes on a positively mystical power to make "right decisions" about the victim's life.

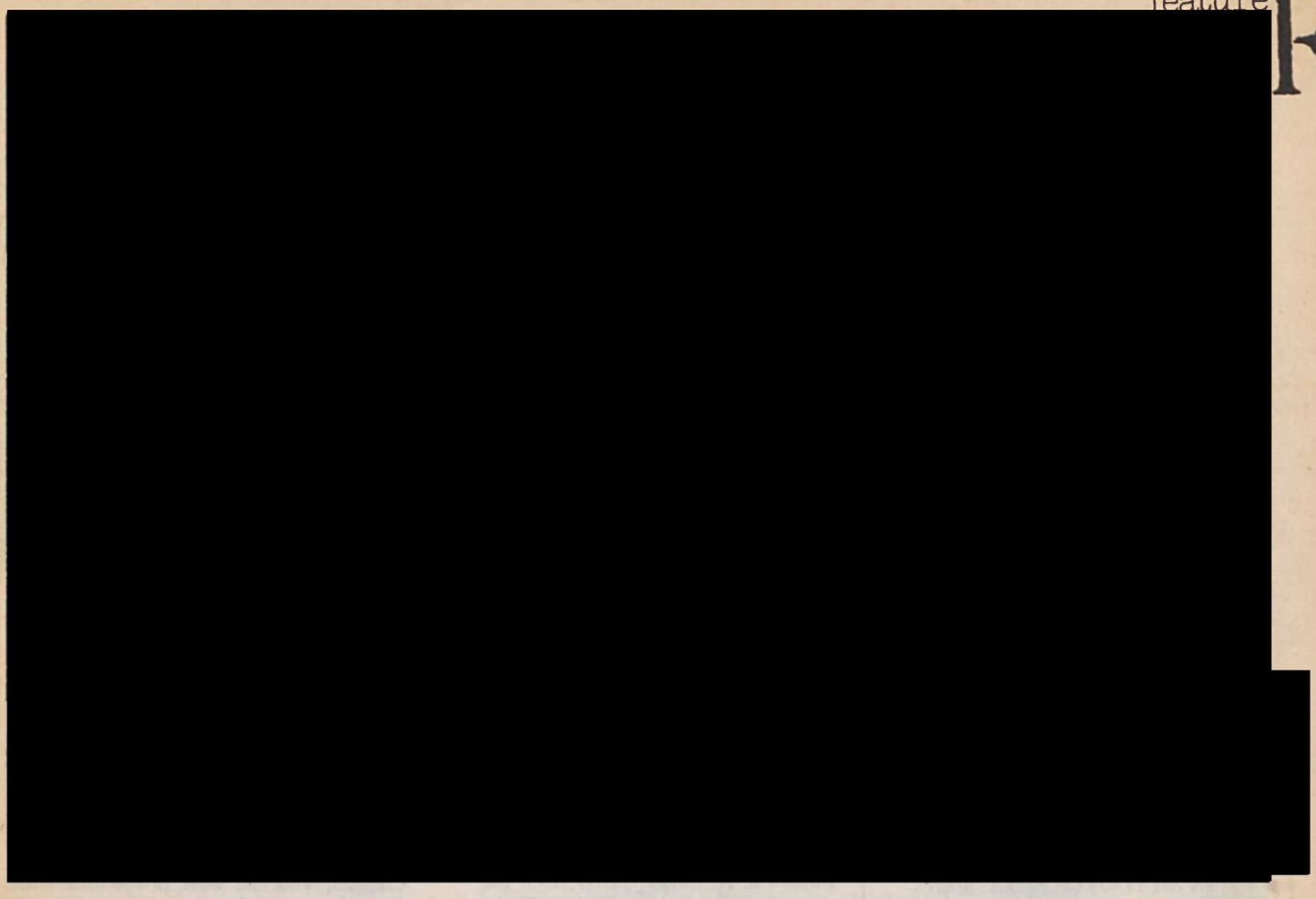
By hook or by crook all power is placed in the hands of the helper to dispense help, to cajole or punish. And so it's small wonder that people are frightened of admitting that they need help.

We hope that the series will not only examine the mechanics and often devastating effects of these double binds, but will also provide glimpses of alternatives to Good Samaritans and professional knights. Women's self-help therapy groups will describe their more egalitarian ways of working, and their attempts to break down the division between helper and helped.

It is our conviction that helping and healing are human skills widely distributed amongst the people. They are skills which can be nurtured and developed. Everyone at some time or another needs both to ask for and to give constructive help in a crisis.

Can we go further and envisage a society where self-reliance and caring interdependence could co-exist happily? Where help could be sought and offered as just one more way, acknowledged by all, of sharing human resources?

Alison Fell and *Rosie Parker*



LIVING WITH THE ARMY IN YOUR FRONT GARDEN

Northern Ireland, for most people, means little more than fear and fanaticism, car-bombs and assassinations. When *Mary McKay* went there last year she stayed with working class Catholic families and talked mainly with women. What she saw of conditions of life for the Catholics spurred her to consider more closely why there is such discrimination and repression against them. In this article she explains the history and political background of the troubles, and then records in diary form her first overwhelming impressions of a country under army occupation.

From the press and television it is easy to get a bundle of glib ideas about the situation in Northern Ireland, which assume that it is much like any other part of the UK, and could be normal, peaceful and democratic if only the population weren't stuck in religious fanaticisms of a bygone age: a sectarianism associated on the Catholic side with a romantic nationalism, harking back to generations of Irish heroes; and on the Protestant side with a backward-looking loyalty to British historical victories irrelevant to the days of the EEC.

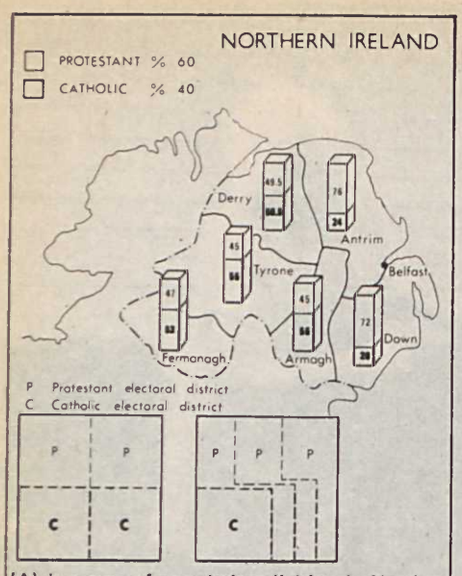
If only, the story goes, people in Northern Ireland would take up more modern ideas, the Protestants would have no *real* reason to keep rights from the Catholics, and the Catholics would happily get on with life in an integrated Northern Irish state and stop worrying about Irishness.

According to this picture, the Catholics were quite justified in demanding civil rights in 1967. Britain sent the troops in to protect them from the bigoted Protestant refusal. But then the Catholics too became unreasonable: their demands went beyond civil rights to nationalism, so the troops had to move against them too.

This popular view of the N Ireland situation leaves people here in Britain feeling befuddled about why the war goes on, and what they are fighting about now. And most of all, people here do not see why the Catholics want so passionately to get Britain out. To many people here it looks as if the British army is left in the middle trying to keep the extremists apart, and aiming to bring back conditions in which "ordinary people" can get on with their lives – their homes, jobs and families.

But this bewilderment and impatience in Britain comes from an ignorance of what life in N Ireland has been since long before 1967. The fact is that everyday life for Catholics in Ulster never has been the "ordinary life" of an average English family of the last 30 years. The essential feature is *not* the peculiarly intense religious differences that persist there, but that ancient economic and social privileges are overlaid on this religious divide, and still exist. They penetrate every aspect of daily life, and it is this that has drawn whole communities of Catholic men, women and children into political activity.

I understood the part played by women very much in the context of a whole community's resistance on a street level to the grinding discrimination in their basic conditions of life.▷



(A) is a map of population division in Northern Ireland. In four of the six counties there is a Catholic majority. Protestants have only been able to maintain their dominance by means of the corrupt voting system.

For example, until 1969 only householders, not lodgers, could vote, and shopkeepers, factory owners, etc., could have a business vote as well as their individual vote – both these were to the overwhelming advantage of Protestants. They still win some majorities by gerrymandering (B) – boundaries are manipulated so that most Catholics fall inside only one ward. In Derry in 1967 this had the effect of giving the Unionists 12 seats on the council, and the Catholics 8, though the ratio of voters was 14,429 Catholics to 8,781 Protestants.

POVERTY AND POWER

On a short visit you have to peer through the dramatic details of the war situation to catch hints of what the place is "normally" like. Once I had got over the shock of the foot patrols among the prams and shopping, the iron-grilled shopwindows, the overhead helicopters, the kerbsides lined with petrol drums against car-bombs, the Union Jacks waving outside concrete-barricaded Protestant villages, the house-high wall paintings of republican lilies – I became aware of the underlying poverty of N. Ireland: the railway stations, small, grey, bedraggled and dowdy; the narrow streets in the centre of town, and their meagre shops; the old cars, the tiny shoddy houses. N. Ireland is an underdeveloped region of the British Isles, economically drained, like Glasgow and the North Eastern counties of England.

Without even considering sectarianism, N. Ireland is getting a bad deal. It has always had the highest unemployment, lowest wages, worst housing, crummiest schools, highest emigration. This affects the whole working class, not only the Catholics. The average wage in Ulster is 88.3% of the British male average, 79.5% of the female. Unemployment is usually twice as high. Over 19% of inhabited houses are officially uninhabitable, as compared with 7% over Britain as a whole.

But Ulster differs from the other underdeveloped regions in one crucial way: in these conditions of all-round scarcity, one group had the power to monopolise what little there was. The Protestants had all the key posts in public and private industry and government, nationally and locally. They used this to give all the jobs, houses and social amenities to the Protestant working class. This has created in N. Ireland a working class divided into two layers: 60% Protestant, with relative privileges, and 40% Catholic, discriminated against in an apartheid type of situation, to the extent of living in fairly separate enclaves of the cities.

This isn't so hard to imagine: the same thing happens to blacks in parts of Britain, and to immigrant workers from Southern Europe who come to work in Switzerland, France and Germany, to do the worst and poorest paid jobs, with very much second-class civil rights.

N. Ireland is special only because the hierarchy in the working class is so highly organised into a system of Protestant *political* power.

FORCED TO BE STRONG AND INDEPENDENT

Women in N. Ireland suffer from the general pattern of deprivation. Their conditions as women are even worse than in the rest of the U.K. 36% work outside the home, and they are even more confined to traditional women's work in textile and service industries. The main firms, like the cigarette makers Gallaghers, engineering works and shipyards, advertise specifically for boys. Women can't be postmen, and only very recently bus conductresses. The Sex Discrimination Act does not apply at all in N. Ireland. The Equal Pay Act is so watered down as to be useless: there is a special clause for N. Ireland that allows employers to keep special grades for women's work – in an area where women's pay is on average £16.73 a week, compared with £36.37 for men.

In recent years government-sponsored industry has been aimed at providing jobs for men rather than women. In 1972 it was claimed that 6,242 jobs were created for men, but only 622 for women.

In industry as a whole, plant and conditions are out of date, particularly in the mills where women are concentrated. A woman from Newry told us that when her mother worked in the local mill only 20 years ago, the mill girls had to work in nineteenth century conditions, standing barefoot in water. The mill horn had called the women to work from their factory-owned houses. Her mother had died giving birth to her ninth child. The daughter spent much of her life in England because the Catholics in Newry, an overwhelmingly Catholic town, could get factory work or no work. She went to London to work in an office.

With such high overall unemployment, it isn't a simple matter of women finding it even harder to get work. Where work is so tight you often find women taken on instead of men, because they can be paid less. This has been the pattern in some parts of industry in N. Ireland, especially in the linen factories in Derry.

We met women in the Catholic ghettoes of Derry, the Bogside and the Creggan, who had work in the local shirt factories when their husbands had none. There's a song with the lines:

"In the early morning the shirt factory horn
Calls women from Creggan, the Moor and the Bog . . ."

This must have affected men and women's feelings about each other. The song goes on:

"While the men on the dole played a mother's role,
Fed the children and then walked the dog . . ."

but a couple of women told us that the women normally did the wife's job as well, to "compensate" the men for their feeling of uselessness during all those years out of work. Often the women had no choice anyway: their husbands went

EMPLOYMENT FIGURES 1969	PROTESTANTS	CATHOLICS
Population	66.6%	33.3%
Civil Service Administration	93 %	7 %
Local Government	94 %	6 %
Health Service Administration	92 %	8 %
Police	90 %	10 %
Courts	86 %	14 %

AREAS OF EMPLOYMENT

1) Shipbuilding and linen

These traditional industries are declining. The Harland and Wolff shipyard in Belfast has a 90% Protestant workforce. The 10% Catholics are all in low-paid, unskilled jobs.

2) Civil Service and local government

Public employment has risen since the 1950s. It is highly discriminatory, only for those "loyal" to the state. In Derry, where Catholics outnumber Protestants 2 : 1, only 26% of public employees are Catholic. There are equal numbers only in labouring. In Fermanagh, a predominantly Catholic county, Catholics have 32 out of 370 local government jobs.

3) Agriculture

10% of the population work on the land, mostly in small uneconomic farms which need subsidies and re-organisation. Government planning projects are leaving farming to stagnate. This means higher unemployment for Catholics, who can't turn to public employment.

In Antrim, mainly Protestant, 8.23% are employed in agriculture, and 5.9% are unemployed. In Tyrone, mainly Catholic, 23.5% are employed in agriculture and 13.45% are unemployed.

away to England for work, for whole stretches of their married lives, sending home money and returning only for the holidays, so the women *had* to keep house as well as do paid work.

These conditions foster the strength and independence you'd expect, but even so we spoke with one woman whose husband, a long-distance lorry driver in England said she wasn't to go out in the evening while he was away. (She did though.)

In fact, on our first evening in Derry, she was one of a group of women friends who took us to a social club. Between the four of them they had 35 children, which was quite typical. With all these children, living in tiny two-up, two-down terraces, the women keep a closeness to one another that has been lost in most English housing estates today. We hadn't time to find out many facts about how women informally help each other nor what formal arrangements there were, like playgroups, but we had a glimpse.

We turned up at the house where we stayed in the Creggan at about five in the afternoon. Maureen and a neighbour, Anne, were sipping tea and doing each other's hair. As soon as we arrived, Maureen ran out for a couple of other women across the road, and soon there were seven or eight of us in Maureen's sitting room, talking as evening fell. Children came in and out; all ages play together in the street, so they can look after each other a lot of the time. We parted only when the women went home to get tea and smarten up to meet again later to go out together to a club.

These Catholic women were in their mid-30s and upwards. Talking with them them about contraception, we found they were reluctant to use it themselves – "It would seem wrong" – and anyway they loved all their children and would have liked more. But they wished the young girls luck. Mary, who was about 55, said that the teenage girls dressed and acted like boys (Bay City Roller pants were the rage), and were very free and brave. Sometimes they were mistaken for boys and picked up by the army. But it was a great pity, she said, that they married so young, often well before 20, and changed, settling for a life of kids and domestic cares, just as she had done.

The Catholic ideology is not solely responsible. There are real material pressures to marry early. A boy and girl never have much privacy, living in large families. Marriage is the only chance to move out. There is even more severe over-crowding since the "troubles" because many Catholic families have left unsafe areas and crowded into the ghettoes. The householder voting qualification has also made Protestant-controlled councils unwilling to build more houses for Catholics. This was one of the chief grievances in 1967 when the Civil Rights Movement began.

There are other restrictions too. Law relating to women in N. Ireland is backward: the liberalisation of the British divorce laws doesn't apply there, and neither does the Abortion Act of 1967 – it is almost impossible to get an abortion in N. Ireland.



Street scene in Derry

So although there is an obvious delight in the children, there are resentments too, often unvoiced. For the woman from Newry whose mother died in childbirth, time spent away in England has made it easier to say how she resents, even rejects, the church, for her mother's early death.

The Catholic church is bound into the life of the people and has an enormous influence on them, not least through running all the schools that Catholic children attend (all education is religious in N. Ireland, Catholic or Protestant). Church attendance is very high. The Catholic hierarchy of N. Ireland is known in the Catholic world as particularly orthodox and conservative on religious and moral matters.

Maureen said that as a young girl she thought the clergy must always be right. Since the troubles she has thought more for herself and is less subservient to the priests, though this hasn't affected her faith. She said that some of the young are much more critical of both the clergy and the faith than she is, and there have been instances of open hostility to the local church when the priests did not show enough solidarity with what militants were doing.

'BIG SPECIALS'

These women spoke a lot about their closeness and courage since the troubles This must be partly as a result of long years of police repression and intimidation. Such deliberate discrimination needs a back-up of force. This is provided by the Special Powers Act of 1922, which gives the government unlimited powers to proclaim an emergency "whereafter it can make whatever regulations it deems necessary". The act has been used throughout the century to intern Catholics without trial. ▷

While the Catholic and Protestant people of N. Ireland to some extent share the burdens of unemployment and poverty, it is the Catholics who are the main victims of the police. The Royal Ulster Constabulary, an armed elite police force almost entirely Protestant, spread fear among the Catholics. They always had some excuse for harassment in a state whose laws make it an offence to interfere with the display of the Union Jack, while the police confiscate any other emblem – such as the Irish flag – if they think it could cause a breach of the peace.

The RUC was backed up by a part-time volunteer force, also armed, the B Specials, who acted like an official Protestant sectarian gang for 40 years. Their disbanding was one of the first things demanded, and won, by the Civil Rights Movement. The woman from Newry told me of her memories of her childhood there: the "big Special", who might be a grocer or a builder by day, who would shove you around with his gun, ask you where you came from, abuse you as a Fenian and tell you to get back to the ghetto where you belong. She remembered the time an armed Special came into a Catholic class-room to question a child about her parents' activities.

CIVIL RIGHTS AND STREET COMMITTEES

Out of this experience of life in Ulster the Catholic opposition arose. The particular kind of protest meant that women became very active. This protest didn't take the conventional channels of Parliament or the trade unions. Although union membership is quite high (54% of working people), in general the trade union movement has avoided the political issues of sectarianism, and the Catholics have not been organised as an oppressed minority in the unions. Nor have they had economic leverage there, as the Ulster Workers' Council strike of May 1974 showed – Protestants in key industries stopped work in protest against any possibility of "power-sharing". Catholics have not been working inside the heavy industry, skilled trades and power stations where trade unionism is traditionally strongest and strikes can have most effect. The working lives of Catholics have been continuously fragmented and disorganised by unemployment, emigration, casual work and unskilled demoralising jobs.

In the local government and Parliamentary sphere Catholics have been effectively barred from influence. Council elections have always given a Protestant majority. At Stormont any efforts by Catholic MPs to change things were always frustrated by the unity of the Protestant majority against them. By the 1960s Catholic politics were at a low ebb: the parties representing the Catholics were demoralised, and the Irish Republican Army was no longer a real force.



Demonstration in Belfast

All this is the background to the types of action the Catholics undertook in 1967-8: the Civil Rights Movement which began the process of bringing people out of their shells to take initiatives like civil rights marches and demonstrations, sit-downs, rent and rate strikes and boycotts of local elections. Eventually, after their marches and mass meetings had been attacked by armed police and Protestant gangs, communities organised barricades and "no-go" areas. These were Catholic areas where people began to run their daily life and defence *themselves*, through street committees and other grass-roots bodies in the locality.

A woman I spoke to in Derry, an active community organiser, said that before the troubles people had been very depressed and demoralised, after all those years with no jobs and nothing happening. It had been hard even to get a tenants' association going. Now people were doing a lot more together, socially as well as politically, especially women. Anything that had been done in the community in Derry, she said, had been done by the women above all.

In Derry and Belfast we heard of projects run by women, like social clubs, a food coop, committees to help people forced to flee from their houses. These kept up a network of social contacts. There was nothing much like them before the troubles. But these forms of protest and organisation seemed limited as the need for military defence of the areas grew. It also became more difficult to meet and organise in this way once the army moved in. It was the Protestant backlash to the Civil Rights Movement which carried the Catholics' protest to armed defence, in which many women took part.

HISTORY LIVES FOR THE PROTESTANTS

The Protestants had something real to defend. Giving way to Catholic demands wasn't just a case of a few reforms here and there. It would mean a total reorganisation of the structure of the society, down to the smallest local institution, and it would mean a real redistribution of resources in a province with small enough resources anyway.

Protestant fury is expressed through the symbols of their historic victories over the Catholics. They parade on July 12 in celebration of the Battle of the Boyne. They parade on August 12, the date of the Siege of Derry in 1689, when the Protestant apprentice boys held the town against the Catholic James II.

The Protestants came from England and Scotland as settlers of land cleared of native Catholic gaels by the invading English armies of Elizabeth I and Cromwell. This past lives on because the same competition goes on today. The descendants of the apprentice boys, organised into the Orange Order, still hold the citadels of Derry, still run the town, and the Catholics still live outside the city walls, in the Bogside, on the economic margins of society, on the dole. These apprentice boys now march with their drums and flags along the old city walls overlooking the streets of the Bogside, flaunting their supremacy.

Sectarian violence has always flared up most when the Protestants have felt most threatened in their privileges. In the late 1960s they were threatened by the Civil Rights Movement. But a deeper fear was that the new Common Market conditions were eroding Britain's interest in a divided Ireland, and that Britain would withdraw economic and political support for the Protestant supremacy.

Loyalist gangs attacked and burnt Catholic homes, setting in motion the train of events leading eventually to the direct occupation of the Catholic areas by the British army, and the internment of hundreds of men and boys.

FAMILY RESISTANCE

You have only to go to their houses to see how greatly this occupation has affected the lives of the women. Rooms are decorated with pictures and ornaments made by men inside: pictures of the "cages" themselves (the Nissen huts inside the prison camps), wooden plaques with pictures of Connolly, leading republican and socialist shot after the 1916 rising. Holy pictures and photos of killed relatives and friends hang on the walls. Some women have leather purses made by internees, with republican slogans and symbols on one side and the woman's name on the other.

Of the women we met, several had husbands in Magilligan and Long Kesh, and visited them every week in special coaches laid on by community organisations run by women. Food parcels are taken every week, costing over £6 a time. It takes a lot of a woman's income, and some have more than one male relative inside, as well as a daughter in Armagh jail. Women also organise



Women organise buses to visit men interned in Long Kesh

relief committees to help financially the families of internees, or generally, families whose homes are destroyed or relatives killed.

The experience of the raids and arrests has given women a lot of courage, out of anger. As mothers, they have had to watch 12 armed men tear up the stairs at four in the morning and pull their kids out of bed, herd the whole family into one room, and search the house. Each time the identity of everyone in the family has to be established. The army in Ulster now has detailed files on the domestic situations and personal life of almost every Catholic. A woman in Derry showed us a brown envelope on which she had noted down the ages and dates of birth of her 14 children. She just hands it over each time the army comes.

Women have themselves been involved in the republican organisations, but I am speaking here only of the way the mass of women have been involved as a community. For example, in Derry, we heard that when the army first came in 1971, they took a school as their base. It was the women who got up a march and picket to move them out of the school.

It is very much as *mothers* that women are moved to action against the army. This shouldn't make us over here too sceptical. The Catholic church and economic underdevelopment do make the family conservative and cohesive in N. Ireland, and this obviously does circumscribe the part played by women in current events. But because so much of the action has been in the communities, where whole families are involved together, domestic life and family relationships have been opened to change. For instance, our friend Jane has a poster in her window supporting the Catholic Social Democratic and Labour Party; her 12-year-old son has put up beside it the Sinn Fein slogan "Boycott the election". The politics and discussion in their daily lives gives parents and children new responsibilities to people outside the family. This changes their relationship to one another. In this situation the family is not just a conservative force: it is also part of the network of solidarity in the community.□

IRISH DIARY

Belfast has a majority Protestant population. The Catholics live in small pockets mainly in the west of the city, several estates, called the Ardoyne, Ballymurphy, the larger Andersonstown, the New Lodge, and the streets around the Falls Road, a long busy road running from the centre of the town. Each of these areas is more or less surrounded by Protestant communities. There used to be mixed areas, but there are very few now.

Our friends live in the Ardoyne. To get there we had to drive through Ballymurphy. It looked like a new housing estate, but very smashed up: rows and rows of newish flats were unoccupied, burnt out. An enormous site, which must have been a factory or something, is used as the army barracks. You can see the jeeps driving in and out, but it's surrounded by corrugated iron. There are huge placards giving the phone number for informers to ring. We didn't stop and look around as much as we'd have liked, because we were never sure when we were in a Catholic area and when we'd passed on into an adjoining Protestant area. We also weren't sure whether we should be worried anyway, but people afterwards said we definitely should.

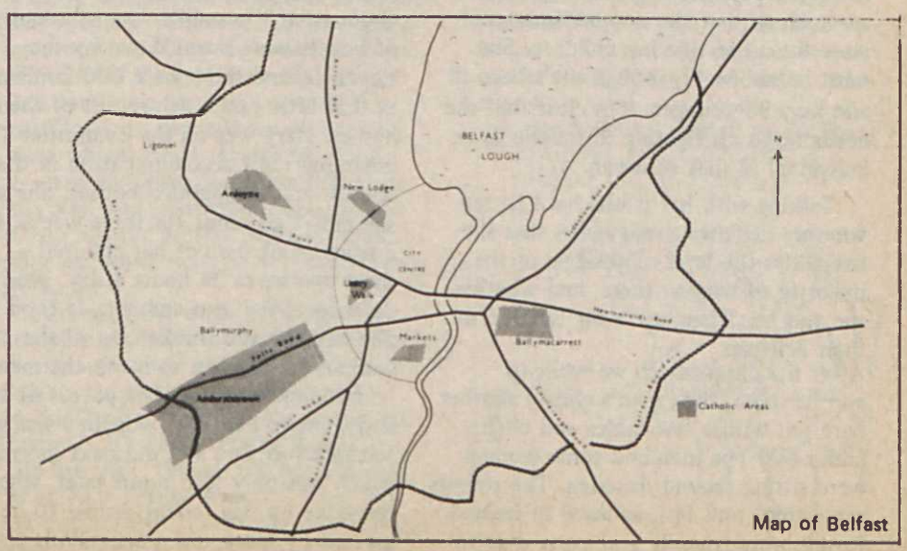
We finally reached the edge of the Ardoyne, along the Crumlin Road. In England you wouldn't talk like that about coming to the edge of such a small housing estate as the Ardoyne, as if it were the border of another country. But it is a bit like that. The first few streets leading into it were blocked off with high concrete walls you couldn't even see over. Outside, on the Crumlin Road, you still have the feeling of being in a fairly anonymous busy street, cars going up and down, people shopping. Inside, there's very little traffic, just a square of crisscrossing streets, an enclosed community where everyone knows everyone else.

The Ardoyne is physically extraordinary; space has a powerful significance. About 2,000 people live there. The estate is built of terraced houses with small front and back gardens, in straight lines crossing at right angles, so that it's easy to see the edges of the estate down any street, except from a small area in the middle – the oldest part, with much narrower, windy streets. Around the edges lie Protestant housing estates.

As you look down the straight streets each way, you see high fencing and concrete walls dividing the areas. At the end of most of the streets there is a messy hut sticking up from behind the wall. These are British army lookouts, which are always manned. You don't see the soldiers, but they can see down *every street* in the Ardoyne except for one in the old part. Beyond the hostile streets immediately surrounding the Ardoyne, on one side are open hills, perfectly placed for shooting down into the streets. On the other, another large Protestant housing estate looks down from a high ridge. The Ardoyne is like the open plate of a deep saucer. Open to the eyes of the army. Every movement can be watched and recorded. People have listened to the army walkie-talkie and heard them noting which house Mrs So-and-So went to today, and what she did next.

You have a strange feeling of being surveyed yet secret, because the street is also an extension of the houses. A lot of people are about, calling in on each other, and the pattern of houses and gardens has great meaning. The women are famous for opening their back and front doors when the shooting starts, so that the men can run around through the warren of ins and outs that isn't accessible to the army. You can't go on feeling you live in your own little private home when *that* is your life.

In the Ardoyne there are no pubs, but republican clubs, seven huge green Nissen huts, all funny shapes and sizes▷



Map of Belfast



The only playground in the Ardoyne

to fit into odd bits of land. The people have built them by contributions to the clubs. They go there in the evening and much of the day too. One evening we were taken out to a club where the Ardoyne women were playing an important darts match with a team of women from another area in Belfast, the New Lodge. There was a bar, and the club was packed with women, and just a few men. We arrived too late for the match – we'd got lost and driven round and round the centre of Belfast in a slightly drunken state already – but we had a drink there and met some of the women.

The teams hadn't been going very long in the Ardoyne. They'd started on the initiative of two of the women we knew who are among the most militant supporters of the Provisionals, and very active in community and relief work. Neither of them was very "political" before the troubles. One had been married with three children. In the mid-sixties her husband had gone off to look for work in Scotland. She didn't hear from him, and went through a terrible depression when she realised he wasn't coming back again, leaving her with the kids and no job. It was only by gradually getting interested in the civil rights campaign,that she came to herself again, she says. Now she is a full-time activist, so much so that she is sometimes cricicised for neglecting her children. She must be about 40, though she's been ill and may be younger. It is clear that she needs to go on fighting to survive as an individual in that situation.

Talking with her it was hard to tell whether her own needs mean that she overstates the level of struggle of the majority of women there, and whether she and her friend are a bit isolated in their activism.

After the darts match we went to another club, the "men's club", another bare hut with a few tables and chairs and a bar. The men and some women were sitting around drinking. The rounds came thick and fast, as usual in Ireland. People were friendly and came over to meet us, because we were with two women who were known and trusted. Then in came two British soldiers, just sauntering in with their rifles. They came in trying to look casual and friendly, nodding hello to people. This is the truce and they're supposed to be taking a soft line on the natives at the moment, though some of them were smashing down their doors a couple of months ago. Anyway, it's apparently part of their patrol to wander into pubs and clubs and see who's there. Their presence on the streets is still heavy: two jeeps at a time, driving up and down, and foot patrols round every corner. In the club no one took much notice, just made jeering asides. They told us that when two friends of ours from London had been here before the truce they'd been questioned when the army came into the club. It was only because of the truce that they left us alone. But that didn't mean they didn't notice strangers, especially strange men. The soldiers were young, embarrassed and gauche, trying to look confident, a bit defiant, as if they were hard done by and unfairly treated because no one was talking to them.

We stayed the night with one of the women, who cooked us a huge plate of spaghetti, and we all sat and ate it on top of too much drink, and talked about what it was like when three rows of houses were burnt down by the Loyalists, and there were 100 families in that little estate driven out of their homes. Mary was on the committee that organised their accommodation in the schools and neighbours' houses. She said she didn't go home for three weeks, and a friend took care of her children – there was work 24 hours a day, plus defence of the area and getting food in. She smoked and smoked, as all the women do, but not so much the men.

I couldn't keep up the pace, felt sick and went to bed. The woman I was with felt sick too, and still did next morning, which was only four hours later, when we woke up still feeling drunk, to be greeted by Mary and a marvellous plate of fried breakfast. She swore it would settle our stomachs even if we couldn't bear the sight of it, and it *worked.*

Then she took us round the streets some more, to the little old part, where there was a wall painting of Connolly on an end house, on green, white and orange. It was a bit mutilated, she said the army did that, but people paint it up every now and then.

Some of the women we'd met the night before were down in the club, cleaning up and getting it ready for later, a morning job for which they are paid. It was all very relaxed, people dropping in and out for a chat and a glass of water. We wanted to go to Andersonstown to pay a visit on someone, so they wrote down exactly how to get there, especially noting which were the Catholic areas en route, so that we could ask the way.

We got there quite easily – once you reached the Falls Road you went straight ahead until you came to a little shopping precinct called the Busy Bee. This is the centre of the estate, and has a people's garage and food coop and bookshop. We went there to see someone who was out for a few minutes, so we hung round the bookshop waiting for him to come back. We stepped onto the pavement to see if he was coming, and suddenly the army was there. Eight soldiers sliding along the side of Tesco's window, rifles at the ready, a kind of remote jungle prowl among the shoppers and kids, peering round the angle of shops, ordered to be on the alert, in that weird everyday world. One of them crouched down beside the green and red slashed prices. No one took much notice. Our hearts were pounding, not with fear, with the shock of the unusual.

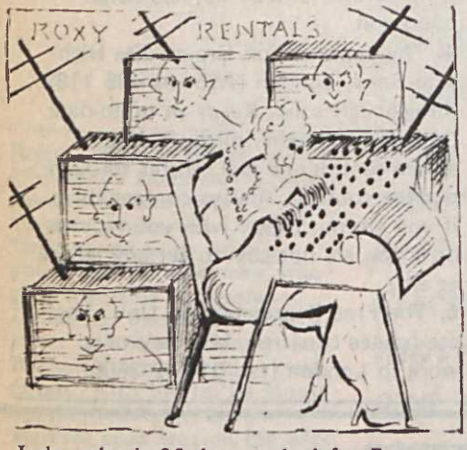
You can't believe it when you first see it. After a few days you get used to it, but the first time we saw the army, in Armagh, we just gasped. They drove up through the houses on the estate as evening fell, their submachine guns pointing over the top of the half-closed jeep. Another jeep stopped at the end of the road, letting three soldiers out, and they lurked round the houses, in the gardens, near the main road as if on some manoeuvre, then went off after a while – we didn't know what they were doing. One of them came up to our front door to read the "RUC OUT" poster, but we didn't realise that was what he was doing. James rushed into the back kitchen with the kid in his arms, white-faced – "The Brits are at the door . . ." Everyone acted calm, chatting about this and that, but you could feel the tension. James had been interned already, you never knew when they'd come again, and people have let their guard down a bit in the truce, when house raids are supposed to have stopped.□

getting the boot

a guide to fighting unfair dismissal

A group of lawyers show how a woman takes her case before an industrial tribunal.
It is vital for us to understand how these tribunals work – they will be handling equal pay claims, and discrimination in employment and training as well as redundancy, unfair dismissal and disputes over contracts.

We have devised the case of Judy Robbins to illustrate how the law of Unfair Dismissal works in practice and to show what happens at industrial tribunals.



Judy, who is 35, has worked for Roxy Rentals, her local TV shop, for ten years as an accounts clerk. Recently she's had to work in the sales office as well, because they've cut down on staff. When she was dismissed, Judy's take-home pay, for a 40-hour-week, was £29. This summer she went on holiday for two weeks with her husband, Jim, and their two children. On their Sunday night flight back the plane was delayed and didn't reach Luton until 4 a.m. Judy didn't go to work on the Monday, and on Tuesday she was sacked. She was given no opportunity to explain, and no reason for her dismissal.



Judy was very upset, but for the time being she and Jim decided to carry on just on his salary until she found another job. She found nothing suitable in the local paper, and after four weeks she'd only had one interview and they wanted references from her previous employer. Household bills were mounting up and finally the prospect of heavy winter fuel bills made Judy decide to sign on at the local labour exchange. She hadn't done this before because she felt ashamed, but now there was no alternative, they needed the money.

At the labour exchange Judy explained she'd been sacked. As she had been working for ten years and paying the full stamp, Judy was entitled to Earnings Related Supplement; but a week later she was told that her benefit was stopped for six weeks because she'd been dismissed for misconduct. (In practice, unemployment benefit is always stopped for six weeks if misconduct is given as the reason for dismissal, even though the time period is up to the discretion of the officials at the labour exchange and six weeks is the maximum.) Judy was also given a white form, headed 'Originating application to the Industrial Tribunal'. It was only then that Judy realised that she might be entitled to compensation for unfair dismissal from Roxy's.

Many married women never discover this, because they have not signed on as their husband's working, or they've only been paying a married woman's stamp and it's not worth it. To qualify for compensation for unfair dismissal you have to have been employed for at least 26 weeks, working at least a 21-hour week, and to make out your application to the Industrial Tribunal within three months. (Under the recently passed Employment Protection Act you need only work a 16-hour week or between 8–16 hours if you have worked at that firm for five years; but nobody – including the Department of Employment – knows when the Act is due to come into effect.) A dismissal is unfair unless your employer can prove that it comes within one of the following grounds as they are now laid down in the 1974 Trade Union and Labour Relations Act: conduct, capability or qualifications, redundancy or employment which would involve breaking the law. He must also show that your dismissal was reasonable; for example, if you've been sacked for misconduct, your employer must have warned you in the past.

Although the white form is very complicated, with the aid of its explanatory notes it is possible to fill in. If you live in England or Wales send it to the Central Office of the Industrial Tribunal, 93 Ebury Bridge Road, London SW1, though the hearing will be at your nearest tribunal. They will ask you to clarify anything if necessary. Keep a copy for your own use at the Tribunal; they'll always send one if you ask. The Tribunal then send one copy to your employer and another to the Conciliation and Arbitration Service, an arguably independent body who are interested in bringing about a settlement in every case. In 1974, nearly 8,000 out of the 10,109 applications for Unfair Dismissal were settled through the Conciliation Officer Service. If you have as good a case as Judy's you will probably get more from a Tribunal.

After three weeks Judy received Roxy's reply. They were resisting her claim and said that they had dismissed her on the grounds of misconduct. They maintained that she had been persistently late, the extra day's holiday had been the last straw, and moreover there had been persistent inaccuracies in the cash register. Judy was appalled: "How could they say that, I was always the first to work, all they care about is their —— money."

A few days later Judy received a letter from the Conciliation Officer, asking if she wanted her to try to achieve a settlement and avoid going to the Tribunal. She told Judy that she thought she'd be entitled to about £300 –£500, if her story was correct, but emphasised that Roxy Rentals were likely to win some part. At a meeting with the Conciliation Officer, Roxy Rentals offered Judy £100.

Initially, Judy was tempted to take this money though the Conciliation Officer had told her that she'd be bound to get more if she won. But she decided to get some outside advice first, and went to see the Duty Solicitor at her local Citizen's Advice Bureau. (Under the 'Green Form' Scheme, you can get advice from any solicitor who does legal aid work, if your income is low enough.) He told Judy how a case is conducted at a tribunal, that although the proceedings are supposed to be informal, in practice they are very legalistic. Win or lose you do not have to pay costs, so Judy decided to carry on her fight. She was advised to take a friend for support, to make a list of all the questions she wanted to ask Roxy's,



ILLUSTRATIONS BY MARY KUPER

and to write down what they said at the hearing so that she could challenge anything new they brought up.

At the tribunal, Judy and her friend sit in the Employees' waiting room. Now and again someone in pin stripes rushes in, has a quick discussion with one of the people waiting and rushes out. Cheques for a few hundred pounds change hands.

Finally Judy's case is called. She walks into the carpeted room and sits down. Her friend sits beside her. Some way in front sit the three men who make up the tribunal; the chairman is legally qualified. The Clerk sits between her and the Tribunal, and Roxy Rentals sit at a table beside Judy's, also facing the Tribunal. Judy's evidence is heard first. She goes to the witness box, takes the oath and then gives her side of the story. She is cross-examined by Roxy Rentals and questioned by the Tribunal. Much later, feeling very harassed, although she's managed to hold her own, Judy is allowed to return to her seat.

Roxy Rentals do not have a solicitor either, as they haven't realised the seriousness of the situation. They have been interrupting throughout Judy's testimony and now have to give their version, also under oath. Judy takes note and, when they've finished, questions them about staff who have left without being replaced, and about her own conduct at work. Roxy's are unable to answer satisfactorily several of her questions, even after they have been repeated by the Tribunal. Note Judy has brought no witnesses with her. You are allowed to bring witnesses but often the situation at work makes fellow workers reluctant to attend. A really essential witness can be subpoenaed by the Tribunal and forced to appear.

Then the Tribunal ask Judy how long she has been working for Roxy Rentals, how much she earned in her last week, how many hours she worked, and what efforts she'd made to find another job. (If you have made no effort, or cannot show what effort you have made, you will get less compensation.)

The Tribunal then ask Judy Robbins and Roxy Rentals to leave, while they reach a decision. After an hour they come back, and tell Judy that her employers have failed to show that she was fairly dismissed and award her £500. (This sum is strictly calculable.)□



Next month we will untangle some of the red tape surrounding the Sex Discrimination Act, and show ways to exploit it.

Where to get Advice

If you are not in a Union or your Union is unable to help you:

1. Go to your Citizen's Advice Bureau. If they cannot help they should at least be able to tell you who can. Some CAB's have Duty Solicitors.
2. Solicitors. If your income is very low, a solicitor who does legal aid work may be able to advise you. Alternatively, if you can afford it you can also pay for a solicitor.
3. Free Advice and representation exists from law centres in parts of London, Liverpool, Cardiff and Kent, but they are only available to people who live or work in their strictly defined neighbourhood.
4. The Legal Action Group, 28a Highgate Road, London NW5 (01-485 1189). Straight but solid. Keeps an up-to-date list of sympathetic solicitors, legal advice centres and law centres throughout the country. Always contact them if you are not happy with your advice or if you are not able to get any advice at all.
5. The Free Representation Unit. These are trainee barristers, but they only work in London (tel: 01-242 3606).

BITES

If you are an engineering staff worker

JOIN TASS

The staff section of the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers
If you oppose sex discrimination in jobs, in pay, in opportunity

JOIN TASS

Don't let the employers organise you out of equal pay
and equal opportunities. Legislation will not be enough.

YOU NEED
ORGANISATION
NEGOTIATION

As well as legislation.
Write for application, or organise a meeting.
Contact: Judith Hunt, National Womens Officer, Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers, Technical Administrative and Supervisory Section, Onslow Hall, Little Green, Richmond, Surrey.

NEWS

Last September three upper class fascist youths assaulted and raped two teenage girls from a working class district of Rome, killing one of them.

The 'Circeo Crime' – called after the elegant beach resort where the murder occurred – was met by a prolonged and angry discussion in the Italian women's movement and press, both left and right.

Rosaria Lopez: Raped and Killed in Rome

Rome, Tuesday September 23: 17-year-old Donatella Colasanti leaves a cinema with a friend, 18-year-old Rosaria Lopez. They accept a lift from a young man in a Porsche, who gives his name as Charles. Donatella, who comes from a lower middle class family, and Rosaria, from a working class family, both live in 'La Montagnola', a *borgata* or new working class area on the edge of the city.

In the next few days Charles rings up several times, inviting them to have a drink with him and his friends. On Monday 29 they decide to meet in the afternoon, but instead of Charles (actually Giampietro Parboni-Arquati, not involved in the crime itself) they find two young men, Angelo Izzo and Gianni Guido.

The girls are persuaded to go to a party at the Circeo, an elegant beach resort near Rome. As soon as they arrive at Andrea Ghira's luxurious villa Donatella and Rosaria understand that there is no party and ask to be taken home. The young men assault them and make a first attempt at rape; the girls half escape but the men succeed in undressing them and locking them in the bathroom.

Tortured for 30 Hours

For 30 hours – the whole night and the next day – Izzo and Guido, now reinforced by Ghira, torture, rape and violently beat the two girls, who have probably been drugged. Donatella and Rosaria cry for help, but at any weak attempt at resistance they are heavily insulted and hit.

Rosaria is raped several times, sodomized "with mechanical means" – so says the medical report – and her head repeatedly immersed in water in a large basin in the bathroom. Each time the men keep her head down a little longer, until she dies.

Donatella is dragged around with a rope around her neck in another room; she hears Rosaria shouting and understands that the best thing to do is to pretend she is dead.

The young men believe that both girls are dead. They load their naked bodies into the luggage compartment of their car and drive back to Rome. They park the car for a few minutes on Via Pola, a street in an elegant quarter of the city, probably to find help in getting rid of the bodies.

Donatella is still alive and passers-by, hearing moans and cries, open the luggage compartment and discover the girls. Angelo Izzo and Gianni Guido are soon arrested in the streets nearby; Andrea Ghira is still hiding. (They have so far refused to say anything relevant about the crime except, "We'll be out of prison in two years.")

In the days following the murder, which has enormous resonance throughout the press, another episode worth mentioning occurs. In a different area of Rome, seven young sub-proletarians repeatedly rape a young girl after locking her boy friend in the luggage compartment of a car – the so-called "demonstration effect".

Powerful Get Legal Immunity

Angelo Izzo, Gianni Guido, Andrea Ghira and their helper Giampietro Parboni-Arquati, are just over 20 years old and attended the same expensive private school run by priests. They live in upper class areas and have plenty of money. Their fathers are an engineer, an industrial entrepreneur, and the director of the Banca Nazionale del Lavoro.

They are also well known to the police. In the last three years all have been caught in criminal activities: two cases of rape (Izzo and Guido), stealing, burglary, and illegal possession of weapons. Each time they got out almost immediately, avoiding any penalty, or remained in prison no more than 18 months.

Against a background of corruption and discrimination throughout the administration of Italian justice – particularly in Rome – it is easy to explain how and why the sons of powerful families get almost complete legal immunity from their crimes. Here the picture is complicated and worsened by the fact that all the boys are also well known as militant fascists, *picchiatori*. Complicity of lawyers and judges is guaranteed by money and ties of acquaintanceship or parenthood.

Immediately after the Circeo crime many different political parties demanded an investigation into the light penalties inflicted on the assassins for their previous actions. The Communist Party unsuccessfully renewed their application in mid-November.

One point is important to emphasise. While searching insistently and indiscreetly into the family life of Rosaria and Donatella, all the press – both left and right – has said very little about the young men's families. They have maintained the tradition of silence in favour of the powerful bourgeoisie.

Rape: An Underestimated Crime

Rape statistics in Italy differ according to the source. A

typically underestimated crime, it is under-registered and difficult to prove. We find an astonishing trend towards a slight decrease in the rate between 1971 and 1974: 1,478 cases in 1971, 1,142 in 1974. In journalists' opinion the capital of the crime would be Rome.

The form of the attack changes from area to area. In line with traditional sexual behaviour, the rapist in the South does not "divide" the woman with anybody. In Central and Northern Italy, on the other hand, the "Clockwork Orange" style is spreading: the rapist prefers to act in a band of five or six men.

90% of victims, the police report, give immunity to the aggressor, for fear of publicity, shame, etc. The legal procedure, as in most countries, is discouraging: the woman must immediately go to the nearest police office, be examined by a doctor, and answer many indiscreet questions about her behaviour during the rape. This procedure tries the victim instead of the aggressor.

'Socially Climbing'?

Three types of comment were made about the circumstances of Rosaria Lopez' murder. First, the conservative and fascist press, which focussed solely on the imprudent, prostitute-like behaviour of socially-climbing girls in accepting a lift in a Porsche and an appointment with well-off young men.

These papers went so far as to distinguish between the proletarian Rosaria — disturbed, restless — and Donatella, little daughter of the bourgeoisie — much more responsible and serious, but ruined by the example of her friend.

Second, the so-called leftist press and the communist newspapers. Here were various analyses and evaluations. As to the young men, the whole anti-fascist press insisted on the political character of the crime: on the lack of values of young fascists, their violence, their classism. In the opinion of the respectable leftist male journalist, this was a typical "class murder".

As though to "justify" the girls' behaviour, most stressed that they wished, naturally, to "escape" from their class; that they had both been *virgin*, that Donatella was still so, and that Rosaria had been buried by the family in her white bride's dress.

FRANCINE WINHAM, 7 DAYS



Film director Pier Paolo Pasolini, who wrote about violence and youth shortly before his murder on November 1 last year.

All underlined the girls' good qualities, as though these qualities were indispensable if the crime was to be defined as horrible, repulsive and tragic. Some of them (*Paese Sera*, for instance, a quasi-communist paper) could not avoid reproaching Rosaria and Donatella, even supporting the thesis that Rosaria's sentimental and social restlessness was based on psychic unbalance.

Pasolini on Violence in Youth

An uncomformist comment came from film director Pier Paolo Pasolini in an article about the violence of Italian youths. Pointing out that it sprang from all young people regardless of their class origins, he stressed that the seven proletarians in the second rape case had been inspired by the same drives, principles and values (or lack of them) as had inspired the rich Izzo and Guido.

Pasolini's analysis was immediately criticised by *Unita*, the official communist newspaper, on October 19:

"It seems wrong to equate crimes which ripened in profoundly different environments; between classes separated not only by money and wealth but even more so by differing cultural, moral and ideal reference points.

"It seems, therefore, misguided and mystifying to talk of a 'mass criminaloid environment', as Pasolini did yesterday in a northern daily. The writer-director maintains that the rich bourgeoisie, living on the nazi mystique and feeding it with aggression and violence — more often than not with impunity, is being copied by marginal and rootless youths from the small towns and the outskirts.

"The explanation of such a phenomenon can only spring from a differential analysis leading back to the *diversity* of socio-cultural conditions producing the very *same* rash of blind and irrational violence."

In any case, almost no comment was made on the question of male violence against women, the core of the crime. The murder attracted eager attention only because the criminals were fascists and a girl had been killed.

Women Endure Violence Every Day

Third, the women's movement, whose position was clear, but not strong enough. There were articles and letters in the papers, especially Dacia Maraini's in the communist press, and in *Manifesto*, the PDUP paper (Democratic Party of Proletarian Unity — an organisation to the left of the Communist Party), to which the Collettivo Femminista Romano contributes.

Manifesto also published a letter from the Collettivo Femminista Milanese, whose most important passages were these:

"The left press has underlined the class aspect of the violence: the hate and contempt of the bourgeoisie for the proletariat which leads ultimately to murder.

"All the other journals were unanimous in their condemnation of fascist violence; as though fascism were solely an economic dominance exercised by one social class over others, or the expression of the more violent and authoritarian fringe of this same dominant class.

"Many similar facts of sexual violence against women happen every day but remain confined to the 'black chronicles' of the bourgeois press, hushed up almost always by the dailies of the extra-parliamentary left.

"We say:

— That sexual violence is only the more gaudy aspect of the violence women undergo every day.

— That this violence arises from the domination that men have historically consolidated in their relations with women.

— That it is a question of power politics, when one sex only is allowed the possibility of self-expression and affirmation, with the consequent denial, or at least limitation, of the needs of the other."

The feminist magazine *Effe* (letter F, for Female) refused to print photographs of Donatella and Rosaria **naked and covered in blood, to protest against the "phallocratic curiosity" of the press. They also denounced the publicity given to the victims' private lives in contrast to the respect shown towards the class privileges of the murderers.**

166 Signatures

Unfortunately, the main response from the women's movement has been a denunciation of the film *Life Size*, shown in Italian cinemas shortly after the Circeo crime. This denunciation, initiated by one group only — Movimento Femminista Romano — got 166 signatures from intellectual feminists and writers.

Their motivation was that "Although the film may have an aim of social criticism, certain scenes — episodes of violence in the bath, gang bang, etc — are anti-educational and constitute an affront to women as human beings."

The link between the Circeo crime and *Life Size* was seen both in content — similarities in style of violence — and in the cause-effect relationship: the idea behind the women's action was that such films, and pornography in the press, mass media etc, drive youth to violence against women.

An impassioned debate arose within the feminist movement. A minority disapproved of using traditional bourgeois means to oppose freedom of expression, ie an appeal to the representatives of justice; moreover, they disapproved of looking for the roots of violence only in the mass media.

In fact the whole movement replied in a disordered and fragmented way to the explosion of interest following the Circeo crime. For feminists to direct their energy mainly against a film, and not towards a more solid and political form of reply, seems to show the weakness of the movement itself.

We can also add that the written analysis was too weak. The pre-occupation with the question of male violence against women drove the feminists to define the Circeo crime exclusively as a sex crime. Actually Circeo is more complex, for it was both a sex *and* a class crime.□

Three members of the Collettivo Femminista Salernitano

Passages from Unita, Manifesto and the Movimento Femminista Romano's denunciation of Life Size translated by Ilana Abramovitch.

Abortion Campaign Action Week Opposes Select Committee

HULL: Dr Berry Beaumont of the NAC Steering Committee (*pictured*) spoke on November 17 at a highly successful meeting jointly sponsored by the local NAC group and the Botanic Ward Labour Party Association (part of Select Committee MP Kevin McNamara's constituency).

[redacted]

Dockers' shop steward Tony Fee, chairing, said that while campaigns for abortion and contraception were difficult to introduce to male workers, it was vital that all NAC activists should take the campaign into the labour movement as a whole.

Local Labour Councillor, Pat McMullan, said that as a Catholic he considered abortion should not be decided by the consciences of individual MPs but by the woman herself.

Support for the meeting was received from local branches of the 'T&GWU, ASTMS, NUPE and APEX.

A resolution calling for Kevin McNamara to implement Labour Conference policy on abortion and to resign from the Select Committee was unanimously passed.□

[redacted]

Nearly 1,000 people attended the NAC Week of Action Rally in Trafalgar Square on November 22. Speakers included Terry Marsland, Mel Read (ASTMS, National Executive), barrister Marguerite Russell, gynaecologist Peter Huntingford, and Dominic Costa (National Co-ordinating Committee against NHS Cuts). There were also songs from Frankie Armstrong and June Tabor.

Although called as a culmination to the week of London actions, NAC was pleased to see banners from groups up and down the country, including Birmingham, Sussex and Canterbury.□

BRISTOL: As part of the NAC week of action, women in Bristol picketed Avon Health Headquarters at lunchtime on November 21. They were opposing the reconvening of the Select Committee and demanding a second out-patient abortion clinic in Bristol using the vacuum-aspiration method.

"Although there is already one Day Care Clinic in Bristol", says Bristol Women's Liberation Newsletter, "some women are still being made to wait up to eight weeks for an abortion.

"Health workers, who are already fighting cuts in the NHS, are also being drawn into the struggle to *extend* abortion facilities in Bristol."□

NAC supporters lobbying MPs Jo Richardson (second from left) and Renee Short (third from left) outside the House of Commons on November 20.

The lobby, which drew 500 people between 2.30 and 9pm, began with the presentation of the Woman's Right to Choose petition — over 250,000 signatures — to sympathetic women MPs.

Representatives of many local NAC groups discussed their opposition to the reconvening of the Select Committee with their MPs.□

[redacted]

SPUC struggles on

PRESTON: About 90 people picketed a meeting organised by SPUC on November 2. The meeting began with a film by Nestles showing a foetus "from conception to birth", interspersed with clips of a child walking with the aid of a parent.

Speakers were Liberal MP Cyril Smith (Rochdale), discredited journalist Michael Lichfield (of *Babies for Burning* fame) and 23-year-old London Borough Councillor, journalist and SPUC member Joanna Nash.

Ms Nash claimed to speak not only for herself, but for her entire generation.

Anti-abortion car window stickers and other posters are to be distributed through a new umbrella organisation co-ordinating the activities of Life, the Society for Protection of the Unborn Child, the Festival of Light and other groups.

Four slogans for car stickers have been agreed: 'Would you be alive now if abortion had been legal then?', 'Abortion: a woman's right to kill', 'Smash abortion abuses', and a line drawing of "a rather appealing baby" saying 'Abortion? My mum said NO'.

Distribution is intended to be through schools, churches, and the Social Welfare Commission, a Catholic adoption agency. The group's committee meetings are at the home of Francis Tulloch . . . secretary to James White MP.□

NEWS

"Of course we welcome TUC motions"

As a member of the London Coordinating Committee of the Working Women's Charter Campaign, I was very disturbed to read in *Spare Rib* 42 that 'Trade Unions Criticise TUC Article', *writes Karen Margolis.*

The article referred to was printed in *Spare Rib* 41, and was based on an article which had previously appeared in our Charter Newsletter. As an assessment of the debate at the TUC conference on the motion calling for support for the Charter, I do not think it can be called inaccurate.

Of course we welcome the TUC motion passed calling for "free abortion on request" — and particularly the support given to the National Abortion Campaign. But the point we have always made is that the Charter is putting forward ten demands for women both at work and at home, and so shows the relationship between many different aspects of our oppression.

A Whole Range

Passing the abortion resolution commits the TUC to supporting only one aspect of our fight. Passing the Charter would have committed it to support a whole range of struggles which women are fighting at present — for example, against closures of nursery facilities. It would have been a big step forward for the labour movement to unite around the ten demands taken as a whole.

The Charter Campaign, far from attacking "the inactivity of the labour movement on women's questions", is directing much of its energy toward building up support in the trade unions and the Labour Party.

But we are constantly aware that the reason why this is often a difficult task — indeed, the reason why the Charter and (partly) an autonomous women's movement is necessary — is that the labour movement has until recently taken few steps to combat discrimination against women and to help alleviate our "double burden".

One final point: we are very anxious that people who criticise us, as well as those who support us, should come to our meetings and make their position known to everyone in the campaign. We would therefore like to know which unions are criticising us, and ask them to contact us to discuss the problems in the campaign, so that we can build it into a strong and united movement in the fight for women's liberation.□



20,000 march for Right to Work

Workers at the Personna razor blade factory in Hillingdon, Glasgow, join 20,000 demonstrators for the Right to Work march in London on November 26.

300 workers, a majority of them women, occupied the plant in October in defence of jobs and working conditions. Personna is a subsidiary of the giant American-owned Philip Morris group which operates in 36 countries.

Highest Since November

The Right to Work march took place two days after the Department of Employment announced the highest November unemployment figures since the last war: 1,168,891. 44,000 unemployed school leavers were still on the dole, and 140,000 workers on short time (outside Northern Ireland).

"We went on the march with reservations", said a representative of the National Federation of Claimants Unions. "We were the only unemployed people there, and the only ones with kids. We've never seen a woman speaking on a Right to Work platform yet.

"Our main demand to the trade union movement is that Claimants Unions should be allowed to sit on local Trades Councils. At present, the only time we ever see trade unionists is on the opposite side of the table at appeals tribunals"

The National Federation's slogan, 'Fight for the Right to Live', demands a living income, job or no job; higher Social Security benefits now; useful work and an end to wage slavery.

Men from Brixton Gay Centre saw themselves as part of the march but were critical of gays who marched with left groups and not under the Gay Liberation Front banner.□

Women and the Cuts

The economic crisis and the effects of the social spending cuts on women at work and at home will be discussed at a London Working Women's Charter Conference on February 28.

The organisers want a broadly-based conference and are seeking sponsorship from all organisations which support the ten aims of the Charter (*Spare Rib* 41).

Sponsorship has already come from Westminster Trades Council, Islington Cuts Campaign, ATTI Willesden Tech branch, ATTI Rank and File, and the National Co-ordinating Committee against Cuts in the NHS.

Groups or individuals affected by the cuts are encouraged to write short papers describing their experiences and struggles. This will enable the Conference to be as informative as possible.□

If you or your group would like to sponsor the Conference, send a donation towards costs, or write a short paper, contact 49 Lowther Hill, London SE23 1PZ. Ring Karen Margolis 01-928 4195 if you want to join the organising group.

First UK Camera Woman

Diane Tammes is the first woman to graduate as a camerawoman from the National Film School in Beaconsfield.

She expects to meet difficulty in finding work, but not primarily because of her sex. Film technicians' union ACTT has been "very sympathetic so far. I think they really are anxious to have women working in TV.

"But so few films are being made. People have been interested but said that in a time of economic crisis it's difficult to use me."



MICHELLE MORISETTE

ANDREW WIARD REPORT

Atua Itukushuk (left), oldest woman in the Eastern Arctic, at the first Inuit Women's Conference last summer

First Eskimo Women's Conference

83 Eskimo women from all across the Arctic met in Pangnirtung, Canada, last summer for the first ever Inuit-speaking women's conference.

They represented 42 communities from Inuvik in the Western Arctic to Nain, Labrador. Most had never left their own areas before.

In regional workshops followed by general sessions they discussed common problems.

They objected to the import of tinned foods and sweets. The only nutritious "southern foods" — vegetables and eggs — are expensive because of transport costs, which the women thought the government should subsidise.

"Country food" was preferable but hard to get — not all men were hunters and most stores didn't sell cariboo, muktuk, seal or char. Local food should be sold in co-ops and an exchange system be set up between different communities.

Alcohol abuse is a problem because of the import of whisky; women wanted sales restricted.

In the schools too traditional ways are being lost — Inuit language, culture and skills. Children can't get southern jobs because they lack sufficient education, but they aren't taught to survive by hunting and fishing.

The women thought job requirements should be based on skills, not certificates. Instead of bringing in "experts" from outside, women should be trained to work in their own settlements. They called for equal pay for equal work.

All opposed abortion unless the woman's health was in danger, and most condemned contraception.

The housing situation made them angry. One woman, Amalii Epo, said, "Conditions are bad. Many of our families have 11 to 14 members and many have to sleep on the floor, because they do not want to sleep with their brothers and sisters at the age of 16. We would like to know if white children sleep on the floor."□

For more information contact Inuit News, 222 Somerset St West, Ottawa, Ontario K2P 263, Canada.

"ladies of high calibre"

The 18-week strike at Thom's Directories, Dublin, was settled at the end of November with only a token victory for the young women involved.

They were clerical workers, aged 18 to 24, earning £18 to £26 a week. In July Margaret Wynne, earning £22 a week, was sacked by J.L. Wootton of Thom's. Her replacement was offered £18 a week.

Eight of the women working there saw the threat to their positions and at once joined the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union.

Wootton refused to deal with the union, said he was going out of business and handed the eight union members their notice.

Since then there have been negotiations, an official strike, a boycott of Thom's publications, a trade union march in solidarity with the women, and much manoeuvring from Wootton, who in August placed this advertisement in a national daily paper:

"Top Flight Sales Staff Available: Thom's Directories, through no fault of its own, is forced to dispense with the services of some of its staff. Among them are several ladies of very high calibre . . ."

The union had to accept this as evidence that Thom's really were cutting down on business.

In November the case was heard by the Labour Court, with the women still picketing Thom's offices. The constitutional right to join a union was at stake — a right easily accepted in heavy industry, but almost untested in small businesses, family firms and weak industries, where employers often sack anyone they so much as suspect of pressing for union membership. This particularly affects women in white-collar jobs.

The ITGWU wanted reinstatement of the women, without qualification, and compensation for the time lost on strike. They got a recommendation for reinstatement plus a requirement that they negotiate immediate redundancy.

The result will discourage office workers following the case.□

"Jobs at risk — no equal pay"

A last-minute amendment is being made to Eire's Equal Pay Act, making another huge hole in it. If jobs will be lost as a result, equal pay won't be granted.

Women working in the boot and shoe industry had taken their claim for equal pay to the Labour Court, a sort of conciliation service. The National Wage Agreement of 1972 included the provision that an equal pay claim can be rejected if the employer is unable to pay. Because the boot and shoe industry is in crisis, the Labour Court recommended against equal pay. This suited the employer of course and also the union, because jobs wouldn't be lost.

But what will happen this year, with the Anti-Discrimination (Pay) Act in force? On December 18 the Prime Minister announced that he would amend the legislation to say that if jobs were at risk, there could be no equal pay.

The Minister for Labour objected that this wouldn't do for the public service sector, where it couldn't be argued that jobs would be lost. Could the Act not be amended to exclude employers who couldn't afford it?

That day 100 women from Irishwomen United picketed the Dail, and there was talk of an occupation.□

John Mayer made no progress

On December 31 the job of equal pay commissioner (Eire) was replaced, under the Anti-Discrimination (Pay) Bill, by that of equal pay officer.

The new officer has statutorily defined functions and powers. The commissioner had not. There was nothing in the job to stop it being a possible channel for achieving equal pay — its scope was very much up to the individual concerned. John Mayer managed to make no progress in his three years of office.

He issued only three public reports and recommendations on cases he investigated, two unfavourable to the women concerned. No information is available on the number of cases he handled. In May 1974 he said "maybe 30" were in his hands — the only definite figure ever given. Most were likely to lapse, he said, possibly because the women were afraid that if they won they might lose their jobs by bankrupting their employers!

A more likely reason is that the laborious procedure in referring an equal pay claim to him stopped women from going through with it.□

Opinion Poll: Fewer Lesbians

An opinion survey conducted for Gay News by National Opinion Polls found that 45% of respondents believed "there are certain occupations that homosexuals should never be allowed to have, like being teachers or doctors". Only 30% disagreed.

Results of the NOP Poll were obtained from interviews throughout England, Scotland and Wales last April. A random sample of 1930 adults from 100 constituencies were asked for their views on issues like abortion, free birth control, the death penalty and law and order.

However, the survey revealed that 40% agreed that homosexuals should be able to live together openly, while only 31% disagreed.

The homosexual was seen typically as being male, middle or upper class, and well educated. Opinions varied as to why some people were gay and others weren't: some spoke of hormones and hereditary factors, others of environmental conditioning.

Lesbianism was seen as rarer than male homosexuality. One man replies, "Sex to women is definitely a part of marriage, of love for the husband . . . This means there will be fewer lesbians because they can obtain no motherly gratification from it."

70% believed that birth control should be provided free for all who ask for it; 52% that abortion should be made legally available for all who want it.

Only 16% felt that homosexuals should be able to marry; and 51% felt that students who take part in political demonstrations should have their grants stopped.

77% agreed that maintaning law and order was one of Britain's biggest problems; 64% that the death penalty should be reintroduced for all murders; and 70% that all further immigration to this country should be stopped.

The report would not be getting much coverage in the national press, said Michael Mason of *Gay News* on November 20. Only *The Guardian* had accepted "an innocuous advert" for the poll.

The National Abortion Campaign has been told about the findings.□



LAURENCE SPARHAM (IFL)

3000 of the country's five million gay people marched in London on November 23 to demand law reform and protest "persecution by a state which ignores us, arrests us and refuses us our civil equality."

Rose Robertson of Parents Enquiry, an information and counselling service for parents of homosexual sons and daughters, called on spectators to listen to the gay movement.

"These people could by your children, your brothers, your sisters. Listen to what they have to say today. The repression they talk about is *your* repression. You who put a stone wall between yourselves and these gay people, *you* are the oppressors".□

Charters: to be discussed

Gay sisters and brothers in Leeds have taken on responsibility for organising the next Gay Workers Conference, to be held on February 14/15.

Possible themes for discussion include failure and success of Charter campaigns and the experience of the Working Women's Charter; unemployed gays and community struggles; gays in the forces; black gays; gay women and the law.

Six gay women and men in London are working on a draft Sexual Rights Charter to present in Leeds.

See Shortlist this issue for details of the Conference.

Lambeth NALGO recently passed a motion supporting Gay Workers:

"This executive committee welcomes active trade union defence of the interests of gay (ie homosexual) workers and in this respect supports the Gay Working Peoples Collective."

IN NEXT MONTH'S ISSUE: Full reports of the proposed Sexual Rights Charter and of the Gay Medics, Social Workers and Dentists meeting in London last December.

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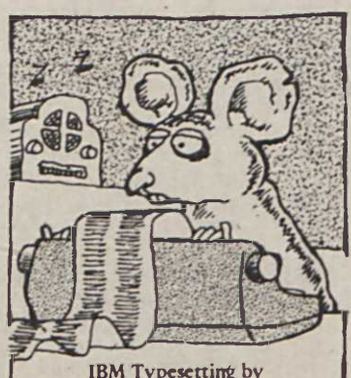
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31/ Jan 75 Lucy: a life crowded with poverty. 'What happened at Heywood': Salford Electrical Instruments equal pay strike. NEWS Keith Joseph and the birth rate. Women as teachers in special education. Gay wives and mothers. Jean Gardiner: How are profits determined?

32/ Feb 75 81-year-old Jessie Stephens on her early political life in Glasgow. Stardom and political subversion: Angela Davis interviewed. Pill Report: information or propaganda? Sheila Hancock: 'But I honestly don't like this idea of an only women company'. Dory Previn interviewed: 'Your outer shell is fragile but your centre is fierce'. First Editorial: Why do we work collectively?

33/March 75 Sterilisation of women: facts and feelings. 'Inside': indictment of prison system, illustrations by Pat Arrowsmith. Frankie Armstrong: folk music and the women's movement. Germaine Greer: population control. Margaret Walters: *Playgirl* and *Viva*. SPARE PARTS How to rent women's films.

34/April 75 Battered women rebuild their lives. Letters criticising 'What happened at Heywood' (*Spare Rib* 31) with first of two articles in response: 'Women's Employers — General Electric Company'. Checklist of women's music from America. NEWS ABORTION ACT THREAT James White's Abortion (Amendment) Bill; list of MPs who voted for its Second Reading. SPARE PARTS Self help herbs.

35/May 75 Communal upbringing in Scotland. GEC women's struggles. New serial: Exercise in Trust — Correspondence between Two Women: a lesbian writer's process of self-discovery guided by a feminist therapist. NEWS Fakenham workers' co-operative. Jean Gardiner: Common Market Referendum. ABORTION ACT THREAT House of Commons Select Committee; list of MPs who voted against Second Reading of White's Bill; West European legislation.

36/June 75 Pain in Childbirth. 'Mouselike': short story about alienated sex. Valium. NEWS Is the government planning to expand child-minding on the cheap? Bradform Gay Liberation organise follow-up to BMA Conference (see *Spare Rib* 29). ABORTION ACT THREAT What the White Bill would would mean if passed; how to take the campaign into your area.

37/July 75 Breast cancer: diagnosis and treatment; personal experience; self-examination. Margaret Walters on Janis Joplin. NEWS Phan Thi Minh interviewed: 'I could talk for half a day about women in Vietnam'. ABORTION ACT THREAT Roundup of National Abortion Campaign activity.

38/Aug 75 Rock lyrics: sexism exposed. How to get an abortion: a comprehensive guide. Exercise in Trust: serial ends. Marsha Rowe on a feminist film about equal pay. NEWS 'I am their mother. They don't understand': single black mothers and the immigration law.

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40/Oct 75 Interview: Nomadic !Kung women of the Kalahari Desert. Men discuss vasectomy. Exhibition: The sexual division of labour in a Bermondsey factory. NEWS African National Congress Women's Day. Italian lesbians come together. DHSS to introduce regulations on contraception marketing?

41/Nov 75 Art and Politics: how the suffragettes used posters. PLUS *Spare Rib* poster offer. Nigerian novelist Buchi Emecheta on the difficulties facing Nigerian women in London. 'My role was reduced to that of a financial officer': why a probation officer left her work. NEWS Women fight for a playgroup in Armagh, Northern Ireland. Reliable pregnancy test — *before* you miss a period.

42/Dec 75 'Once we fake orgasm, we are trapped in the biggest collective lie of all' — female orgasm — a new feminist approach. 'George Davis is Innocent, OK' — Rose Davis talks about the campaign to free her husband. NEWS Depo-Provera 'hot stuff in the contraceptive world' — the injectable contraceptive on trial on 3rd world women. Interview with London woman bus driver. Breast cancer screening — a critical guide.

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NEWS

With this issue we begin regular coverage of attempts, by the women's movement as well as government agencies, to change women's social and economic status as inferior and dependent.

Lesley Wilde surveys the state of existing equal rights legislation and the Campaign for Legal and Financial Independence explain the origins of their demand.

1. Real Equality Now?

Both the Equal Pay Act and the Sex Discrimination Act were enforcable through the Equal Opportunities Commission from December 29, 1975. Women and men should now have equal job and educational opportunities, but will they?

Under the terms of the Sex Discrimination Act it becomes illegal to discriminate against women in arrangements determining who should be offered employment, the terms offered and refusal to offer employment.

It is also illegal to discriminate against women in providing accommodation, credit or a mortgage.

In the educational sphere discrimination against entry to universities and medical schools becomes unlawful, while at work, the Act allows the entry of women into apprenticeships, training schemes and promotions.

There are, however, 'areas of non-specification': where sex is seen to be a "genuine occupational qualification" — however one defines that; and a clause giving the employer the right not to employ women where a radical reorganisation in the work place would have to occur. This point could prove ambiguous and contentious.

The Commons decided that two amendments — covering male midwives and protective legislation regulating women's hours and safety at work (Factory Acts 1961) — should be referred either to other agencies (ie the EOC) or be made the subject of further legislation.

One of the immediate effects of the Act will be the abolition of sexist job advertisements. But another of the Act's ambiguities is how far sexist stereotypes in the media and schools will be abolished.

"Broadly Similar" Work

Under the Equal Pay Act sex discrimination in pay and conditions of employment can be eliminated by establishing a woman's right to equal treatment (1) when she is employed on work of a "broadly similar" nature to that of men, or (2) in a job which, although different, has been given equal value under a job evaluation scheme.

So it's not surprising that with the aim of minimizing the cost of the Equal Pay Act, employers have managed to evaluate the woman's job lower than the man's.

The act does enable a woman to challenge an employer who refuses to grant equal pay, by appealing either to the Industrial Arbitration Board or an independent Industrial Tribunal.

Passive Recipient of Complaints

The EOC has the power to retrieve money from the employer — in some cases up to £5,200 per woman or 104 weeks' back pay — but it remains a passive recipient of complaints, not an active commission fighting for women's rights.

Only by actively organising through their trade unions around the injustices and inconsistencies of the £6 pay limit and equal pay, of restricted access to positions of power and so-called freedom of job opportunity, can women improve their position.

Both these Acts, in legislative isolation, aim to improve the objective conditions of women's existence — without relating those objective conditions to subjective reality. In this way the State still maintains a discriminatory policy by denying women the right to financial, legal and social independence from men.

Pregnancy — Unlawful Dismissal

Another Bill due to become law next year is the Employment Protection Act, one section of which relates to women. Under Clause 38, dismissal on the grounds of pregnancy becomes unlawful, unless accompanied by an offer of suitable alternative work. After two years with the same employer a woman will be entitled to six weeks' maternity benefit and the right to re-instatement up to 29 weeks after the birth.

From 1977, when the maternity benefit scheme becomes fully operative, a pregnant woman leaving her job will be entitled to the State maternity grant of £9.60 a week. The balance between this and what she was earning when she left work will be made up by the employer, who receives it back from the Maternity Pay Fund. A percentage of the employer's national insurance contributions (0.4%) are hived off into the fund.

The Act is, however, inadequate in comparison with other EEC countries, where average maternity leave with pay is 14 weeks.

Reduction in Snoopers?

An official report sent to Barbara Castle last October concerning the cohabitation rule will soon be published. Published by the Supplementary Benefits Commission, it shows that 8,000 women with children and 1,000 widows a year are affected by this ruling which cuts benefits to women suspected of being economically supported by a man.

While not advocating abolition of the ruling, the Commission does recommend a great reduction in the number of investigators — known as 'sex snoopers' — of women on social security. It's difficult to say how far this is a move towards equality — a recognition of women's right to independent income - or merely a cut-back in public expenditure.

The cohabitation ruling has serious implications for Britain's 650,000 one-parent families, the majority of whom are women. The 15-month old Finer Report, recognising the particular financial, legal, housing and emotional diffi-

2. Against Dependence

The Demand for Legal and Financial Independence is concerned with women's dependence upon men, and the way in which this dependence is reinforced by the law.



Despite the ostensible goodwill of the Equal Pay Act and the Sex Discrimination Act, the government has done little to change a particularly sinister kind of inequality in an area over which it has a great deal of control: the treatment of women as dependents in social welfare and tax legislation.

The significant unit in taxation, national insurance, and supplementary benefit is the family — a family which consists of the breadwinner and his dependents, ie the man and his "woman and children", a family in which the woman is not regarded as a fully responsible human being.

A married woman, for example, cannot claim supplementary benefit in her own right, her husband must claim and she must depend on him; and the Cohabitation rule ensures that the unmarried don't escape this disadvantage.

Group's History

The history of our group is perhaps similar to many other campaigns of the women's movement. The idea was put forward by a small group of us, who wrote a theoretical paper[1] for the Edinburgh National Conference in June 1974. The paper was adopted

NEWS

as a Demand of the Women's Movement, but handed back to the small group to create an effective national campaign.

This is particularly difficult with a demand which does not, like the Abortion Campaign, have for its focus a single issue, but which must challenge a complex web of government regulations; entrenched views about the family; and the complex emotional reactions of women themselves to their position of dependence.

Information and Comment

During the last year we have concentrated on providing information and commenting on government proposals.

We produced a pamphlet *The Demand for Independence*[2] which gives a detailed account of the way various state departments enforce dependence. It has been recently updated to examine the changes in the law resulting from the Pensions Act and the Employment Protection Act (which have produced improvements but some disappointments).

In addition we submitted evidence in mid-1975 on the phasing out of the married women's option to pay reduced national insurance contributions; on discrimination in occupational pensions, etc; and we have tried to establish a relationship with sympathetic women MPs.

More than Lobbying Needed

It is clear, however, that the fundamental changes we want require more than the lobbying tactics of a small group, and we hope now to develop a broad-based campaign with an initial priority on publicity. In this column we will try to provide a regular source of information on new legislation and government plans — and suggest tactics for local groups, so that we can build up a network of national activity. We will discuss some of the theoretical problems of the demand, such as the future of the family; and also the problems of the political organisation of a women's movement campaign, with its conflicting needs of structure and flexibility.

It is crucial at this stage that we hear from other people, to start a two-way flow of ideas and information. Other groups may have very different ideas about tactics and priorities and we need to open such differences to discussion.

We hope that many groups will recognise the importance of these issues and work on them, as it is only with the strength of the women's movement as a whole that we will be able to make the changes we need.□

1. Published in 'Conditions of Illusion', Feminist Books.
2. Available from 7 Killieser Avenue, London SW2, 15p and postage.

culties of one-parent families, recommended a guaranteed maintenance allowance and a new system of family courts to deal with matrimonial cases.

This allowance, it was suggested, would remove the stigma of having to rely on supplementary benefits. But Barbara Castle has stated that no One-Parent Family Benefit can be introduced until such time as the Child Benefit scheme has a chance to work — and this does not become fully operative until 1977.

One benefit that is to be conceded, however, is a child benefit of £1.50 for the first or only child. Even this will only go to 250,000 one-parent families.

Neglected Areas

The most important areas of discrimination against women — in taxation, national insurance, social security, marriage laws, family property, nationality, maintenance, nursery provision and provision for battered women — are largely neglected by current legislation.

Further legislation and a continuing struggle in the women's and trade union movements are necessary before any real equality is achieved.□

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WHAT EVERY WOMAN SHOULD KNOW ABOUT VIBRATORS

As the first company to introduce vibrators into the U.K. and having sold some hundred of thousands, we feel that we know more about them and their use than most.

The most important thing to remember is, **that they do work** — providing the woman has no violent prejudice against the use of artificial sexual stimulation. Some women find the shape off-putting. The phallic symbolism, deliberately created by the makers to emphasize its sexual usage, gives them the impression that it is meant to be used as an artificial penis, and indeed it can and is so used. Some women, however, find the effect — when used in this way — to be more numbing than stimulating.

The vibrator is designed and is far more effective when used for clitoral stimulation and its undoubted value for this purpose has been well established by Masters and Johnson in their book "An Analysis of Human Sexual Response." In the book they describe how, using a similar device, they were able to bring to orgasm women who have never before reached a climax.

These were extreme cases obviously. Normally, the vibrator is used to provide extra stimulation during love making and is particularly useful where the woman's response tends to be slow. And, of course, it is just as often used purely for personal pleasure.

Finally a word about quality. There are many different makes on the market today, all of similar design, ranging in quality from very good to absolutely useless. We have been selling the same model for seven years and have enough confidence in it to offer you our special 'money refund' service if you are not satisfied.

If you want to experiment with your own personal vibrator, just complete the coupon below.

Please send me a Harmony Personal Vibrator.
I enclose Cheque/P.O./Cash for £3.50 (including postage and packing).

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NEWS

SPARE RIB



Tottenham's new childcare centre

Sharing Childcare and Talking

Since late last summer women in Tottenham, London, have been meeting twice a week to share child care and talk together.

They use the local Community Centre, which has plenty of play space. The Community Relations Commission provided £50 for toys when the group formed, and employs an organiser, Alice.

Of the 30 or 40 mothers on the register, all with children under three, about 15 come to each session. They are supposed to stay with their children because the centre isn't registered, so they use the place to meet other women, show films, and discuss problems and possibilities.

One women who goes regularly is a registered childminder. She takes her own children and her charges because she thinks it's more stimulating for them to be with children their own age than stuck at home with her.

Those who can find babysitters have just started to meet one evening a month as well.

At present the group is fighting for funds from the Community Development Project and Haringey Council to buy more toys and pay playleaders. This will enable them to get involved in other things.□

The Mothers' and Children's Group meets in West Green Community Centre, Stanley Rd, London N15 on Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1—4pm, and one Thursday a month at 8pm. New members are welcome, and any visitors who want to talk about their work, children, women's groups or whatever.

New Open Collective

The London Women's Liberation Workshop is alive and well well and living at 38 Earlham St, London WC2.

The last bi-annual meeting of the workshop, at the end of November, tried to face up to the fact that it had ceased to be the focus of the women's movement in London; that it was no longer the co-ordinating centre for the federation of London groups; that it was under constant financial strain and that workers could no longer be paid.

On the other hand, the workshop had continued to function as a meeting place for some groups, and for many women, both in England and abroad, was their only point of contact with the movement.

It was providing a vital information service, the phone was always ringing, and women needing help, advice, information, support were using the workshop; letters arrived constantly from all over the country. The bookroom was regularly in use for its comprehensive selection of women's literature.

At the bi-annual, there were enough women who wanted to maintain these numerous aspects of the workshop and to create others, in spite of the fact that it was not possible to assume the support of all London groups or guarantee the payment of workers.

The myth of representation of the women's movement having been finally exploded, the reality of the workshop's many valuable functions was exposed.

New Open Collective

So, since December 1, 1975, the workshop has been run by an open collective through a rota system set up from week to week. One evening a week there is a meeting for all those on the rota and for any other women interested in participating in the collective running of the workshop.

All decisions, from the price of the newsletter to the policy of the workshop on talking to the press, have to be discussed and decided upon at these meetings. We have not abandoned the decisions of the past made at bi-annual conferences, office collective meetings, etc., but are reconsidering and discussing every aspect of the workshop.

We have just begun and a great deal has to be sorted out. For example, it has been suggested that we have different subgroups or collectives concentrating on different aspects of the workshop, so that women could devote time to one specific area, such as the bookroom.

Some of the decisions will necessarily affect the wider movement, and we therefore need information, comment and feedback from women; especially from groups in London. We would like to hear from you: 01-836 6081.□

Dampax and Dr.Blacks

At today's prices you will spend between £300—£350 in your menstrual life-time, reports Bristol's Free Sanitary Protection Group. They are demanding free NHS provision of sanitary towels and tampons.

They held a Demenstruation at the end of November to protest the profits of firms like Southalls (Dr Whites and Lil-lets) and Tampax. Last July the Price Commission recommended an immediate reduction of 10% in recommended retail prices or their abandonment altogether.

The latter has been implemented, and as a result one firm is offering a free green plastic comb with every packet of STs. Another is running a competition with a prize of a holiday for two.

"How would Southalls react if their prizewinners were two lesbians who intended to visit 'gay Paree' in suitable fashion?" asks 'Sister Julia' in 'Lesbians and Sanitary Protection: or What a Couple of Taboo Subjects'.

"Judging by some (of their) adverts", she continues, "the existence of lesbians is either ignored or unknown. A current Tampax advert starts, 'Like all young women of previous generations you think a lot (of course) about young men'. Lesbians should write to Tampax complaining."

Women's Lib — "Worthwhile"

Many of the women who received the demenstruators' leaflets and heard them chanting 'The curse makes a hole in your purse' and '2-4-6-8 Women have to menstruate; 3-5-7-9 Buying Tampax is a bind' "thoroughly agreed with us", one sister reports. "Several said that at last it seemed Women's Lib was doing something worthwhile."

The group are rightly optimistic about the campaign's appeal — every month 13 million women buy sanitary protection. Work will need to be sustained, however — the Price Commission can only make recommendations. Unless MPs take them up in Parliament the firms have no obligation to recognise their findings.□

Free Sanitary Protection Group, Women's Centre, 59 Union St, Bristol 1.

P.A.M. Trust
Pregnancy Advisory and Medical Trust

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ABORTION,
CONTRACEPTION,
STERILISATION

Immediate help and advice
Registered Medical Charity

64 OXFORD STREET, W1
01-580 4847

COURSES

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON GOLDSMITHS' COLLEGE Department of Adult Studies, Community and Youth Work Course. Applications are invited for admission to a two-year full-time course starting in September 1976. The course is designed to train and qualify people for work with adults and young people in a variety of different community settings. The kind of applicant we are looking for will be between 23—43 as a general rule and will have worked for a minimum of two years. They will probably have had some related experience (part-time or voluntary) and may or may not have formal educational qualifications. They will have to be able to learn from their experience; to organise much of their own learning; and be able to work out their own priorities. Selection will be by written application and interview. For further details write to: The Admissions Tutor (SR), University of London Goldsmiths' College, Department of Adult Studies, Community and Youth Work Course, 38 Lewisham Way, New Cross, London SE1 6NP

FEMINISM IN MANCHESTER Two courses on women in local history at Rochdale and Wilmslow W.E.A. centres starting January. Also WOMEN AND FILM courses starting January with NIGHT CLEANERS film. Fee £3.50. Phone Manchester University 061 273 3333 ext 386 for details.

THERAPY

PRIMAL THERAPY write Jenny James, Atlantis, Burtonport, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal, Eire

Woman psychotherapist (Jungian) now has vacancies in Highgate area Tel: 01-348 5593 before 10am.

JOBS

PHOTOGRAPHY people and things. John Harrison, 1 Florence Road, Beckenham, Kent 658 3636

Wanted RED LADDER THEATRE requires an ADMINISTRATOR. She/he should have organising experience, and knowledge of the Trade Union and Labour movement. Also an interest and willingness to participate in all other areas of the company's work (except performing). To begin by end January 1976: salary £35—45 per week. Applications in writing as soon as possible stating: 1. Theatrical/political/administrative experience. 2. Reasons for interest in this work. 3. When you can start. 4. Telephone number. The company will be based in LEEDS, but applications to 58 Wray Crescent, London N4 (tel: 01-263 1063).

URGENT
TOTTENHAM NEIGHBOURHOOD LAW CENTRE are looking for a qualified lawyer with an interest in Women's Rights. Please ring 01-808 8879

PUBLICATIONS

Natural cosmetics you can make at home. Recipe booklet 60p including postage. Sheila David, 45 Chalcot Rd, NW1

Rising Free, left-wing bookshop, 197 Kings Cross Rd, London WC1. Large selection of radical women's literature with mail order service. Including: VD HANDBOOK 8p, PAMPHLET OF THE FIRST WOMEN AND HEALTH CONFERENCE SHEFFIELD 15p, CIRCLE ONE, a woman's guide to self health and sexuality 80p

RESEARCH MATERIAL ON WOMAN AND SOCIETY. Enquire for specialist catalogues. TARA BOOKS LTD, Shortacre Park Rd, Winchester, Hants. Winchester 2239

SAPPHO, the only lesbian feminist magazine in Europe, 50p inc post, 39 Wardour St, London W1V 3HA. Meetings held every Tuesday 7.30 pm upstairs room, The Chepstow Pub, Chepstow Place, London W2, off Westbourne Grove 40p admission for non-subscribers

New design WL badge 14p (incl. postage). Stop Rape American pamphlet on self-defence for women (illustrated) 26p (incl. postage) from Sisterhood Books c/o 11 Gt Windmill St, London W1

1976 Year of the Dragon hand-drawn calendar. Send 40p. Croowes House, Broxwood, Dembridge, Herefordshire

EVENTS

Ilford Women's Group is having a meeting in support of NAC, including film and book stall, on Monday 19th Jan at 8.00pm, at Vine United Church Hall, corner Albert and Oakfield Rd, Ilford. (Creche provided). Also a Jumble sale on 24th Jan at 2.00pm.

Feminist Disco at the UPSTAIRS ROOM, FESTIVAL INN, DORSET ROAD, SW8. 21st December. A night of ALL REGGAE FOR ALL WOMEN Starts 7.30pm Entry 20p

18 January at UPSTAIRS ROOM Feminist Writers Poetry Event. Bar open 12 to 2pm, event continues to 4pm. All women welcome, bring along your own poems. FOR OTHER ENQUIRIES CONTACT WOMENS L. WORKSHOP TEL: 836 6081

WORKING WOMENS CHARTER CAMPAIGN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

The Working Womens Charter Campaign is organising a national conference to be held on a weekend in late March in Coventry, open to all groups and organisations supporting the Campaign, and to which each organisation may send two delegates. The main themes of the conference will be: a) Perspectives and strategy. b) Amendments to the Charter. c) Regional and National structure of the Campaign. Details of the conference will be sent to those on the WWCC mailing list (£1.50 for one year's subscription) by mid-January, all others interested in participating in the Conference can obtain further information and application forms from: WWCC, 49 Lowther Hill, London SE23 1PZ

ACCOMMODATION

Cottage, cheap, accessible to London but reasonably cut-off, wanted to rent indefinitely as country retreat. 01-348 5563

LARGE ROOM IN SHARED HOUSE in south central Manchester offered in exchange for part-time (approximately 20 hours per week) baby care. Box 433.

Wanted: room in mixed house. London area. Box 435.

6th person (woman) to live in house in Stoke Newington. We are 2F and 3M and black cat, gay and straight. Interests vary, some are working to change ourselves. We also want society to change. We garden, dance, make music and put finishing touches to house and garden. We have equal shares in ownership. One share approx. value £2,200. Part loan arranged. Box 437

Anyone interested in setting up a communal not sex-role stereotyped household with us in Nth London? Write to Box 436

WANTED

BASS PLAYER wanted for non-sexist rock band. Barbara, 403 Latimer Road, W10

HELP! Spare Rib desperately needs storage space for back copies (at present many rotting in rain) preferably in easy reach of London: dry basement/garage/attic etc. Contact Janie of Spare Rib 01-437 2070

PERSONAL

ATTRACTIVE BISEXUAL WOMAN 20's seeks similar gay/bisexual woman for close friendship. Bristol area. Photo helps. Box 432

I am British and seek temporary marriage of convenience with American man. Debbie. Box 431

Shy gay girl needs to meet similar in Coventry/Birmingham. Box 430

GAY SWITCHBOARD
01-837 7324
24-hour information and referral service for homosexual women and men

English guy wishes to marry American girl. Idea: mutual convenience and understanding. Chris 637 1220

Photodates, SAE to Dent S.R., 29 Westfields Avenue, London SW13

GROUPS

YORK Women's Group meeting Thursdays 7.30pm 57 Nickle Gate

Anyone interested in starting a Women's Group or sharing a flat or working in a co-operative, in Lincoln, please contact Box 434.

SOUTHAMPTON WOMEN'S LIBERATION GROUP meet every Wednesday 8.00pm at the Anchor East Street. For further information contact Lucy Wyatt, 17 Hillside Ave.

Jenny wishes to contact anyone in her area interested in forming a Women's Group. Jenny Thomas, The Flat, Holt Grange, Holt Pound, FARNHAM, Surrey.

Homosexual/Bisexual women join the Campaign for Homosexual Equality. CHE is your voice—make it louder! Meetings and socials through out Britain. Send SAE 9"x4" to CHE (332), 29 Kennedy St, Manchester 2.

KINGSTON AREA new group forming. Phone Elinor 01-949 1596 evenings. S.E. London women's group forming. Anyone interested phone 01-318 1032 or 01-693 1874

PETERBOROUGH Women's Group welcomes new members. Contact Lyn Boothman, 37 Winwick Place, Westwood.

GREAT YARMOUTH Women's Group meets Mondays 7.30. Phone Heidi Burgh Castle 754

Women's Group in Golders Green area. For details phone 458 6865

We are starting a Women's Group in Shropshire. Please ring Mary Ironbridge 3245 or Helen Worthen 446

WOMEN'S GROUP STARTING IN NEWARK contact Jean East Stoke 430

WOMEN'S RELEASE

Release is extending its legal and welfare services to include women's rights and resources. Women coming to Release can now get help and advice on all legal and welfare problems (incl pregnancy, abortion, contraception and sterilisation) plus information on activities, groups and organisations concerned with all aspects of the women's movement. Feedback from and contact with sympathetic women doctors and solicitors urgently needed. Any information from women working in the above areas also welcome. Release, 1 Elgin Ave, London W9. Tel: 01-289 1123

If you want to join or start a group, find work, a travel companion, or a missing friend, start a household or share a house, have something to sell or swop . . . then run your own Classified Ad.

COPY DATE FEBRUARY 18th FOR MARCH 17th

Please send a large stamped envelope with all replies to Box numbers.

Rates: 10p per word, 15p caps, £1.50 for semi-display (semi-boxed ad.) 50p for Box numbers.

Payment: Ads must be prepaid and sent to Spare Rib, 9 Newburgh Street, London W1A 4XS. Please make all cheques and PO's payable to Spare Ribs Limited.

Conditions: Spare Rib reserves the right to refuse any classified ads.

☐ Tick if Box number required
☐ Tick if Semi-display required

I enclose £ for no. of issues.

Name:

Address:

.

Print your ad below in block capitals, one word in each box. Underline any words you require in caps.

7		
10		
13		
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NEWS

WORKSHOPS AND DISPLAYS

The future of the women's movement will be the main theme of the next National Women's Liberation Conference, to be held in Newcastle on April 24/25.

This was decided at the end of October in Newcastle by 45 women representing groups in Sunderland, Leeds, London, Hull, Scotland, Liverpool, Sheffield, Lancaster, Southampton and Coventry.

This first Planning Conference agreed to follow a basic but modified Conference structure of workshops and plenary sessions.

"The last Conference tried to cover so many topics in workshops, and if you missed one it was difficult to get information about it. We felt that a better idea would be a system of information displays permanently fixed throughout the conference," reports a sister from Newcastle Women's Liberation Group. These displays themselves could generate workshop discussions.

Whatever You Can Afford

By early December, however, it had become obvious that the Conference would not take place *unless women give money now.*

"The 1975 Conference in Manchester was about £1000 short by the end", writes Nuala Morton for the National Planning Group. "A collection was started at the Saturday night social. The first contribution was £300, given anonymously. The sum total came to just over the £1000 mark.

"Beautiful as this response was, it has still meant that very little money has been carried over to this year's Conference.

"Our national gatherings are getting larger as our numbers increase, which makes it more and more difficult to find — let alone pay for — large enough accommodation,

The Planning Group are appealing to women's groups and sympathetic organisations and individuals to contribute to the cost. Cheques may be made payable to National Conference 1976, Account No. 89080319, National Westminster, Civic Centre Branch, Newcastle upon Tyne.

For creche contact Coast Women's Group, 94 St George's Terrace, Newcastle 2.

For acknowledgement of donation, send money via Nuala Morton, 75 Brintons Road, Southampton.

Anonymity Recommended

Important changes in the rape law were proposed in a Home Office report published on December 10.

A committee headed by Justice Rose Heilbron recommend anonymity for the woman and rape juries with a minimum of four women and four men to achieve "a balance of the sexes".

The Committee was set up in the wake of last year's Law Lords ruling that a man was not guilty of rape if he honestly believed the woman consented.

The Heilbron Committee▷ support this view but stress that, at a trial, this would be a "desperate defence" to put forward.

The Committee wants to reduce the extent to which the genuine rape victim's private life is "canvassed" in court proceedings. Courtroom questioning at present, they say, may not "advance the cause of justice but in effect puts the woman on trial".

A victim's previous sexual history "is of no significance as far as credibility is concerned", the report continues.

Anonymity would encourage more victims to come forward and give evidence leading to the conviction of the rapist, they say, likening the rape victim to the victim of blackmail, in which the anonymity provision already exists.

Home secretary Roy Jenkins welcomed the report and is studying its recommendations with his colleagues. A statement is expected soon.

Adopting the Heilbron proposals, Labour MP Robin Corbett (Hemel Hempstead) drew second place in the private members' Bills ballot on December 17. His Bill, giving protection for raped women, has its second reading in the House of Commons on February 13.□

Report of Advisory Group on the Law of Rape, Cmnd 6352, HMSO 55p.

CARDIFF REFUGE TO CLOSE?

Cardiff's refuge for battered women is in danger of closing down for lack of money after South Glamorgan Council turned down its application for a grant towards the end of November.

The house, which opened in July, has already sheltered 19 women and 47 children. The Women's Aid group, who run the house, revealed at their first Annual General Meeting that it is desperately in need of cash.

So far, the refuge has relied mainly on voluntary contributions. But, says secretary Midge Cooper, "Things are going to run out and break down, and how long will people go on giving? Over the coming winter, electricity alone is expected to cost about £150."

The women's main hope has been the Urban Aid scheme, which is funded mainly by the Welsh Office. But applications for this have to be vetted by the local council. This year, South Glamorgan has refused to pass any Urban Aid applications, saying they cannot pay their 25 per cent share of the grant.

The grant would have covered running costs and paid the salaries for two full-time workers. At the moment, there is a qualified social worker, Ms Sue Harding, who gave up her job to work full-time at the house.

Ms Harding commented: "Despite a great deal of work and enthusiasm on the part of the group, our financial future seems to be rather blackened by the lack of monetary support from the local authority. The need for the refuge has obviously been proved time and time again and is backed by the findings of the Select Committee on Violence in Marriage." (*Spare Rib* 41)□

Janet Wright and Louise Jacob

Meet the readers

Spare Rib held its first readers' open evening at the end of November. The eight women who came from all over the country, had answered an invitation a year ago when the completed our Readership Survey. We found lots of support and constructive criticism of the magazine. For most of the women it is their main contact with the women's movement and they found that reading *Spare Rib* reduced their feelings of isolation: one woman said that until she read *Spare Rib* she had thought she was abnormal: "But now I can't stand other women's mags. *Spare Rib* has completely changed my reading habits."

When you are involved in producing a magazine, it is hard to have a clear picture of who reads it, in the world outside our crowded office. This open evening gave us a chance to do this and the criticisms and suggestions we received (as well as the praise!) have been tremendously useful. So we intend to have another session soon and ask readers interested in coming to get in touch; and Thank You to the women who came last month — we really enjoyed meeting you.□

RR READ DG

NEW ISSUE OUT NOW
Articles on Women and the Crisis, Namibia, Portugal, Spain.
Review of Newsreel Collective's film on abortion 'An Egg Is Not A Chicken'
PLUS Fassbinder's 'Bitter Tales of Petra von Kant' and Hazan's 'A Bigger Splash' — films about homosexuality reviewed
20p (INCLUDING POSTAGE)
FROM 9 STRATFORD VILLAS, LONDON NW1
BULK ORDERS AND SUBSCRIPTION DETAILS FROM SAME ADDRESS

Info..Odds & Sods..Advice

Women and Housing
I am doing some research into Women and Housing, but there doesn't seem to have been much written on the subject. If anyone could give me any information on such matters as the attitude of building societies to women wanting mortgages, women and council housing, and attitudes of private landlords, or could suggest any sources, I'd be grateful.
Love and thanks
Wendy Francis
c/o CCS Pigeonholes
University of Sussex
Falmer
Brighton

**Women's Rights A Practical Guide* by Anna Coote and Tess Gill (Penguin 60p) is good initial reading. It covers areas such as married women's rights to the family home, rights in property for divorced women, rented accommodation, your rights as a tenant, and mortgages for women. It also contains a number of suitable references.

★

Plastic Specula
I've read lots of articles recently about self-help and self examination but not one of them has said where I can obtain plastic specula. Can you help me.
Love
S A Wood
Leicester

*If you want the specula for a self-help group, you can obtain them in boxes of 25 from your local medical suppliers. You can find their address in the Yellow Pages telephone directory. Ask for Eschmann plastic specula.

However, if you just want an individual speculum Nancy Mackeith will be glad to supply you with one for 25p plus 10p postage. She can also proivde you with the Sheffield Women's Health Conference Report which contains a transcript of a talk by her about self-help.
It would be useful if you are not sure how to use a speculum. It costs 15p. Nancy's address is 16 Methley Terrace, Leeds LS7 3NL.

Women in Psychiatry
I am a nurse in a psychiatric hospital and am doing a project on 'Women in Psychiatry'. Can you please recommend any reading material that might be of help to me.

I would also like to hear from anyone who has ever been involved either as a patient, nurse or a psychiatrist, and has felt that their sex has in any way influenced the way they – and/or other women (or men) have been treated.
Thanks
Marta Strass
228 Doxey
Stafford

*Contact the Women and Psychiatry Workshop, c/o Vicky Randall, Room 708 Polytechnic of Central London, Elsley Court, 20-22 Great Titchfield Street, London W1.

★

Rape Centres
Hilary Davison would like to make it clear to some readers who may have been mis-informed, that she does not run a rape centre in Derby. She has only considered the prospect. We are sorry about this, and apologise to Hilary and readers for this confusion.

★

Quick Divorce
A friend told me that you have a leaflet on 'quick divorce' by post. Please will you send me one or put me in touch with a sympathetic law centre if you have no information at *Spare Rib*?
With many thanks
Mary Winter
Manchester 14

*No we don't have it, but you can obtain a simple two page leaflet on 'Do-it-yourself-divorce' from Camden Law Centre, which outlines the conditions. They also have a more detailed and comprehensive booklet on the subject. The address is 146 Kentish Town Road, London NW5.

There is another useful publication called *Getting A Divorce* by Edith Rudinger, 60p from the Consumers Association, 14 Buckingham Street, London WC2.6DS. See also *Women's Rights: A Practical Guide*, by Anna Coote and Tess Gill.

★

Women Artists
As a painter, recently emerged from a University Fine Art Course, I am at present a part time lecturer at a College. I am appalled at the ratio of women staff to men teaching the visual arts, considering the ratio of women students graduating from colleges and universities.

I believe that a Women's Artists Union has been set up, concerned with rectifying the number, or rather lack of women, sharing in mixed exhibitions and organising all women's exhibitions.

I would be gateful if you could let me know of the group concerned.
Thanking you in anticipation,
Sara Selwood
Tooting Bec

*The Women Artists Union is now known as the Women Artists Collective, and can be reached at 43 Blenheim Crescent, London W11. At the moment they are involved in discussing the possibility of starting a cultural centre. They are also trying to encourage the formation of small local groups for the development of more grass roots activities.

★

Women in Media
Correction from Tamar Karet
New address of Women in Media group. We meet on the last Monday of every month at 7pm upstairs at The Lamb and Flag, 33 Rose Street, London WC2.

★

Feminists and Homosexuals
A.F.F.I.R.M. (Alliance for Fair Images and Representation in Media) A group of women in North London have got together to try to do something about sexism and offensive stereotyping of homosexuals in the media, in advertising and in the press. All of us are frustrated with our attempts to make impact through individual letter writing and feel that some sort of coordination between individuals and existing groups could help to focus our collective efforts more effectively.

Women in Media, Women in the Communications Industries, and the Gay Rights Media Group are already working from within the media. Their impact could be greatly enhanced if a broad information and communication network could be set up linking interested gay and women's groups over the country to relay information about specific protests, rally support for particularly important ones, get advance notive of newspaper articles and radio/television programs concerning women and homosexuals to insure a wide and immediate response, and if possible demand that representatives of groups be consulted in advance on subjects which are controversial and may be given biased treatment.

Use of existing newsletters and magazines, and the organisation of local telephone trees could make it possible to mass a large protest quickly, and even if it were confined to letters and phone calls it might have an impact on editorial policies if not upon the general public. As for advertising, sexist billboards and tube posters are an obvious target and we hope to have our sticker and counter-graffiti campaign soon underway in London.

If people have ideas, AFFIRM would like to hear from you, whether or not you have time to actually organise things. A small group could be effective providing other people would be willing to rally occasionally and write the odd letter, or serve as a branch of the telephone tree. For details of fortnightly meetings or other info phone Josette 01-340 2596 or Ann 01-485 2799, or write to AFFIRM, 40 Croftdown Rd, London NW5. (If you can afford it, stamped envelope for reply would be greatly appreciated.)

Info..Odds & Sods..Advice

Stretched to breaking point

Five women talking about why they went into mental hospital, what they were looking for and what they found there.

by Rosie Parker, Jane Wilson and Alison Fell

A woman is stretched to breaking point by trying and trying to meet all the contradictory demands made on her. She looks for support, and is usually prescribed drugs. If tranquillisers and anti-depressants fail to shut out her conflicts and hold back her feelings – what then?

Mental hospital is the solution still offered to thousands of women. "The end of the road" is how Susan describes it. Susan is one of the five women who talked to us about their experiences in National Health Service mental hospitals.

Like many others, Susan was told that she should be hospitalised "to protect herself from herself", but was it more to protect those around her? Family and friends rarely have the time, energy and confidence to step into the caring role, previously held by the woman herself, to give her the self-affirming support she needs at that moment. Maybe they are the ones who are being protected from something they cannot cope with – extreme, apparently inexplicable emotion.

"Please stay in hospital," Susan's husband begged her, "please stay, I can't help, let the doctor try and help you." Susan stayed. The prospect of hospitalisation was almost welcome. Her collapse was being licenced and she thought that she was being offered asylum – a place from which to gain a perspective on her emotional upheavals, a space to breathe, away from the pressures surrounding her.

We asked Susan, Katherine, Elaine, Jill and Jean if hospitals had answered their needs. Although they were willing, eager even, to tell us their stories, most asked for their identities to be concealed. A "break-down", "crack-up", "freak-out", "depression" is still seen as something shameful.

The five women were all hospitalised for short periods, in the North or around London, and all are under 50. In other respects they are quite different; they come from various economic backgrounds, some are married, some are single, some have children, some are still fighting while others are resigned. Yet when Katherine read through the other interviews, she commented "they could all be me". The organisational pressures of hospital life, and their shared position as patients at the bottom of a hospital hierarchy, to a large extent erased differences between the women. Although there is no denying the advantages of coming from the same social class as the psychiatrists.



DRAWINGS BY ALISON FELL

The women don't tell horror stories and can't be dismissed as exceptional cases. They are the ones who went in voluntarily, came through and out the other side – almost half the patients leaving hospital in 1972 had been patients for less than a month. However, for many long stay patients, hospitals live up to their name – bins, society's dustbins. In the 1971 Census of Psychiatric Hospitals 65% of patients had been in for more than two years and 29% for 20 years or more. These are the patients who are ejected for the very reason that they have become institutionalised and over dependent. Then there are women who get out but have been so frightened and disturbed by their experiences in mental hospital that they live in terror of being sectioned (compulsory committal) every time they go to collect their prescription for the drugs they have become addicted to.

Clearly then, these women's stories can't sum up mental hospitals. They only provide one side of the picture – that of the patients. But these five women are absolutely united in condemning the attitudes they came up against in the hospitals. In a complex way, society's anxiety and perplexity in the face of emotional disturbance is encapsulated in the role allocated to mental hospitals.

"We were treated like children," the women told us, with the nurses as mothers and the ultimate paternal power resting with the doctors. "I could wear it from the doctors, just about," said Susan, "but not from those god-dam nurses in their pin stripes, why, they were no better than I was." The environment resurrected all the rebellious resentment which

After great pain, a formal feeling comes –
The Nerves sit ceremonious, like Tombs –
The stiff Heart questions was it He, that bore,
And Yesterday, or Centuries before?

This is the Hour of Lead –
Remembered, if outlived,
As Freezing persons, recollect the Snow –
First – Chill – then Stupor – then the letting go –

by Emily Dickinson (1830 – 1886)

as a child she had had towards her mother.

The women's sense of self respect and their ability to help themselves was eroded. Patients, like children, are given no say in the running of their "home" and no power to shape their own day. But what else does it mean to be treated as a child? They were constantly watched, ordered about one minute and patronisingly indulged the next. They had no rights and worked for nothing. If they inquired about their treatment they were met with "Because I say so." Their descriptions of their feelings and experiences were discounted. And other people were licensed to punish and bribe them into "acceptable" behaviour.

Just as parents expect more compliance from their daughters, and offer them a narrower path of acceptable behaviour, so too with women in mental hospitals. The variety of behaviour expected and tolerated in women is narrower than in men.

Yet, as Phyllis Chesler[3] and others have pointed out, what is considered acceptable and normal in women is considered "mad" in mankind. Susan Lipschitz[1] explains: "Women are more likely than men to manifest symptoms of mental illness in our society because they are, as a group, defined as 'ill' by society." The ideal of mental health for women echoes the "symptoms" of emotional disturbance: passivity, weakness, emotionalism, dependence, illogicality, living in a world of feelings, etc. The double bind is breath-taking. If you rebel against this conception of femininity, you are abnormal – crazy. If you concede to society's expectations and demands and become all woman, by male standards you are mentally disturbed – crazy.

Katherine



Superficially Katherine was in a better position than the other women to deal with a psychiatric institution. She knew a bit about psychiatry, she was eager to talk about her feelings and she shares the background of most psychiatrists – upper middle class.

When she began to have incapacitating anxiety states she felt that "it had to be talked about . . . I had to find somebody to talk to". She wanted to know if other people had anxiety states and she wanted to see someone else's perspective on her conflicts and confusion.

Her search for "somebody" led her into a mental hospital. Once inside she was forced back into herself and left to analyse her analyst's silence.

Perhaps because she was so articulate and educated, her psychiatrists refused to take her suffering seriously. They threw her questions back at her, individualising her feelings and isolating her – Only you can answer these questions, only you can help yourself, only you are feeling these things, they told her.

Katherine has been in a mental hospital four times.

Things came to a head with her when she started teaching. At work she was given a great deal of responsibility, yet she was regularly criticised if she took any initiative. She sees now that her actions or innovations were regarded as an implied criticism of the school. At the time she lacked such insight. "Did I think I was suitable teaching material, they used to ask me."

She and her husband were politically active, and occupied in giving away everything he had inherited, out of a mixture of idealism and guilt. However, Ian couldn't share her with another man. Katherine didn't want to leave him though sexually she only wanted another man, Paul. There were contradictions on all sides.

"I was walking down the steps at school when I began to feel faint. It was as if my head was apart from me – a horrible feeling, a strange sensation which might easily have been flu coming on, but it wasn't. Three days later the feeling was still with me and I was lying in bed crying and saying – 'I can't.' I lay there feeling desperate. I couldn't bear noise, I felt as if I was going to be smothered at any second and I couldn't walk because my balance went. I didn't realise it was mental for about 48 hours."

Kathering often repeated, "You have to have a lot of strength to get yourself helped in the first place." She finally went to a VD clinic about a minor infection and there she broke down. "They were very kind and put me in touch with this shrink. He was quite nice but he didn't seem to realise that I had desperate, urgent problems. What I really needed was a place to get away from everybody, which is the only good thing about mental hospital – no one can get at you there.

"I got myself together a bit and came to London. I found a GP who I was told was sympathetic to getting people to see the psychiatrist attached to a large NHS hospital. I went to see the GP looking alright; hair washed and everything fine, though I was having these awful sensations, fear and giddiness.

" 'I don't think there is much wrong with you,' he said, looking me up and down, 'why don't you find a flat on your own.' I hadn't thought out what I wanted to do. I felt confused, I had had no time to think. I didn't want to leave Ian, I didn't want to give up Paul, I couldn't go to my parents, I was no longer teaching.

"I don't believe in being mentally ill, but I know that there is such a thing as being mentally disturbed. I mean I was certainly disturbed – an acute state of anxiety is what they termed it. One doctor called it that, another something else.

"The next day I went back to the GP and pulled my mascara all down my face, covered my eyes with water and rubbed Vic into them to make them red. I suppose the doctor thought I was very ill to have bothered to make such a mess of myself, he said, 'I think I might get through to somebody this afternoon.' "

Katherine entered a NHS mental hospital two days later and almost immediately regretted struggling to be admitted. "When I arrived a nurse asked me if I wanted to go to bed. I replied that I was terribly hungry and went to the canteen. Everyone there was sitting ▷

shaking. I didn't know what it was and it frightened me. They couldn't hold on to a cup without slopping tea. It was very alarming.

"I asked a nurse when I was going to see the doctor. She said, 'Oh, it might be this week or next week, I don't know.' She added that the spook I felt in those people in the canteen was *all in my mind.* That was the first inkling I got of the way it was going to be. The way one would have to play it – she was on the other side and I was sick.

"Then I met this really nice woman. She had a terrible story about her marriage which sounded similar to mine and like me she had nowhere to go. We thought we'd stick it out together."

Katherine's stay was bearable because she made friends with other people in the hospital – unlike the other women we interviewed. They found that the staff deliberately broke up groups of friends, perhaps seeing patient solidarity as a threat to their authority. Or the patients themselves refused friendship, feeling that it would somehow confirm the fact that they were as lost as the people around them. Katherine's friends even created their own group therapy, as they found the hospital group therapy useless.

Katherine is eager to describe her feelings. But she says that she talked for no more than 20 minutes during the three months of daily hospital group therapy because of the size of the group – sometimes up to 60 people.

She objected violently to the psychiatrists attitudes during meetings. "They would sit there and not say anything – I don't know if it was part of the treatment or not, but it was terrifying. You were completely at their mercy, they were able to change your drugs, prescribe ECT or whatever and yet there was no way of communicating with them."

She described how one woman who believed she was pregnant used to beg constantly for a pregnancy test, only to be ignored. It seemed to Katherine that the psychiatrists maintained power and control by establishing an impenetrable distance between themselves and the patients. Even when she had an allergic reaction to the drugs she was being prescribed they refused to tell her what they were. She wanted information for reassurance as much as anything else: "I would ask if other people had these feelings and if people ever died from anxiety states. 'You can only answer it for yourself', the doctor would say."

She saw her psychiatrist for about three minutes every two weeks: " 'You look attractive today', he said once and I spent two weeks worrying about it; was I too sexy, was I caring too much or not enough about my looks?

"My mind completely switched off, all I was interested in was what was happening to so and so, has she got off with whatsit. It was a rest but it didn't sort me out at all. They say that it takes two years to get over a breakdown, which is exactly what it took me. The hospital made no difference at all. Its only use as far as I was concerned was that it licenced me to tell my husband and my parents the truth – what they had done to me.

"Hospitals can be very nasty unless you are strong, which is a contradiction in terms – you go there because you are weak."○



Elaine

Though Elaine's background and needs were quite different to Katherine's, she condemns mental hospitals for the same reasons. "I went around to a heck of a lot of different nurseries and foster homes and ended up in a kid's home where I stayed for about seven years." After such a childhood Elaine needed time to herself, a space to discover what she wanted and respect for her privacy.

The mental hospital where she went with heroin addiction provided neither peace nor privacy. She felt watched, manipulated and invaded.

Here she compares the hospital to the therapeutic community where she finally came off drugs and where no coercion was used on the patients: "You could do what you wanted to do, go when you wanted to and sort things out for yourself with the help of other people."

Elaine can't remember how many times she has been in mental hospital. Aged 15 she was addicted to heroin.

"I first went in after I'd been using for about five months. I was living at my boyfriend's father's place. We got really bad, we'd just be lying around fixing and watching TV all day. And the heat – it was a centrally heated place so we'd turn it right up. We never did anything round the house and in the end Kevin's father got really sick of it. You know, he was going out to work and paying our board and lodgings, yeh, he got tired of us.

"So Kevin went up there and pushed to get himself admitted. Then I went up because I had nowhere else to go – I couldn't have stayed with his father.

"At first you're really just sort of quiet. You don't know what is going on. You're nothing. You just sit and wait for the next meal."

Elaine was the youngest patient in the mental hospital. It didn't bother her unduly but she was upset by the way the staff treated the elderly women. "Nothing was done for them apart from dressing them, feeding them, chasing them up and down the corridor or getting them back when they ran away.

"For a few people that place worked. It seemed to work for the housewives who came in for a nervous breakdown leaving six children at home. When they first came in they'd be put on pills and stuff. They'd rest and find people in the same situation who would sit around with them, knit and talk.

"When I first went in there it was pretty easy for me to leave again because people didn't know me. But after a while I was stopped from leaving on the dot. They'd cut me down gradually. Once I was down I'd say, 'I'm leaving, I'm going,' and so they'd put me to sleep. One time they gave me sleep treatment for a fortnight. When I woke up I still kicked up and wanted to leave."

She fought to leave because she was frightened of group therapy. "There was no support in the group, nobody knew what they were doing. The stronger people would always pick on the ones who were quiet. There was no way you could get out of it and it completely broke me up. I used to sit there terrified that somebody would speak to me or ask me a question.

"Once I managed to get out of hospital I just forgot about the unit and started fixin'. Then we'd go in when we were fixin' so much that the stuff ran out. You know, we'd still be withdrawing and we'd realise that we'd have to go in otherwise we were going to be really ill. You'd have to say that you really did want to come off and that you were really going to try – this time."

Elaine loathed the sensation that she was being controlled and constantly observed. She particularly resented the idea that she was being noted down and filed away: "All my life I've had a file behind me that I've never been allowed to see. I was in a kid's home where they kept a file on me for seven years – annual and bi-annual reports. At the hospital they'd have staff meetings to read the cases. You'd walk past the office, see them chatting and think, 'I hope that it's not me they're talking about'. Then they'd all come out and you'd know that they'd been told something about you."

Elaine rebelled. Perhaps it made her feel like somebody. "I was always a trouble maker. I used to disrupt everything and really was quite a nasty person. The staff said that as soon as I began to get on with them, I'd turn round and kick them in the teeth.

"When I went in I'd soon get together with a guy which in the end would turn out to be a right disaster. I didn't think women liked me. The doctor said it was because they were shit scared I'd take their man away."

Eventually she was sent to a small therapeutic community in the country where she lived with about eight other addicts and "a guy called Simon who was more or less one of us, although he hadn't used drugs.

"There you didn't get hassled. You were just treated as someone who had a problem. You were sort of on your own and you had plenty of time to think – that was the main thing.

"In the summertime we'd just get up and lie out on the lawn and in winter we'd sit by the fire and play records. The people in the village called us dirty junkies. They'd stare at us through the gates – that brought us together. You didn't have to go to group therapy and try to think of something to say. The only meetings were to decide who was going to cook, wash up and clean the front room. People would stay there for about six months and then just sort of leave and get a job. I did."○



Susan

Susan went into hospital feeling depressed, isolated and defeated. Like Katherine, she wanted somewhere to escape to and she needed people prepared to "work" with her through her problems. It was a relief to be committed – to cease to be a capable person, but she was still ashamed of being unable to cope.

With these mixed feelings she came slap up against the authoritarian structure of hospital life; the rules and the petty indignities. Her depression gave way to fury. It was a familiar pattern with her.

Instead of allowing her to use or express her anger, the hospital tried to threaten and dope her back into passivity. They gave her no chance to work through her feelings. They no longer defined her as "sick", but as a "trouble maker", disrupting the carefully controlled fabric of the institution. Looking back she feels that nothing positive came of her rebellion: "It was just me against the system, as usual."

For two years Susan had been a social worker; slowly the barrier she had erected between her own problems and those of the women she worked with broke down. "Instead of being the social worker, the responsible figure, the one who made the decisions, I completely crumbled."

Six months previously she had got married. "All my life I had had this big thing about getting married. There's always been *that* to look forward to. Eventually someone was going to come along and love me. Then, when it happened . . . he's a really great guy and all that, but wasn't there something else? Wasn't there a bit more?

"I had absolutely no friends except for Tom who I leaned on heavily. He worked in the evenings and anyway I wasn't usually home until 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning.

"Then in the space of about two days I just completely closed off. I just went right inside. I just wasn't connecting at all. Tom phoned the doctor. She just took one look at me and said that I should go inside to protect me from myself. I'll never forget it – the sense of relief, the almost immediate sense of ease. It was kind of letting it all out, it was over, I was going in, I was going to get fixed, I was going to get cured.

"I arrived there and I stood still in the hallway – it was just a big room and there were all these terrifying people. I knew I was sick, but I wasn't . . . there were old men urinating and playing with themselves, there were young men – dossers come to dry out, there were women who were . . . who just kept trying to kill themselves.

"I just wanted to hide but they made me go in and sit in the room with all those people. I couldn't stand it. I was crying and I said to Tom, 'Please I don't want to stay here, please take me home with you.' He started crying and he said, 'Please, I can't help you, let the doctors try and help you, please stay.' "

Like Elaine, Susan felt dazed and stupefied at first. Her bed was the only place where she felt secure. "All I had was this bed." But the staff wouldn't let her stay on her bed, they continually urged her to "sit with the others".

Gradually, her stupor gave way to fury: "I thought, they've no authority over me, these little girls in their pin stripes, they've no experience of what I'm feeling and yet they think they are above me. They were so patronising and condescending. I could wear it a bit from the doctor but I couldn't wear it from those little nurses. I was no feminist then. They were a thorn in my side. You'd queue for your pills, stand there in front of them and swallow so that they could check you had taken them. Within a week, far from being depressed, I was the angriest person in the world."

Susan soon learned that the hospital operated on a system of punishment, threat and reward. "I was basically a tough person but I still got really knocked under. You see I knew that if I screamed or broke a window they would just shoot me in the ass with largactil and drop me in my bed. Then there was the whole blackmail thing of 'How dare you question what we're doing. You've come here completely broken to pieces and we're putting you together again our way. If you don't like it you can go, there are plenty of people queueing up to be admitted.' "

As well as the staff/patient power structure, Susan was aware of the rigid hierarchy amongst the staff, with the consultants at the top and female black student nurses at the bottom. Attitudes of the women on Susan's ward towards the staff on the lower rungs of the ladder varied: "People had contempt for them or liked them simply because they had no authority – no power. It was always the student nurses who made contact with you. The rest of the staff had no time to sit and chat because they all had administrative work. If you tried to talk seriously to the students about their lives or your own, they got nervous. Maybe they felt that kind of talk was the doctor's job."

Susan echoed Katherine's criticism of the doctors; they had no respect, they didn't listen. However, she says she saw the doctor more than most of the women in with her. "I know lots of women who didn't get to see their doctor after they were admitted. I did – perhaps because I was more vocal or perhaps because my husband was middle class and could speak their language. Anyway, in two short sessions the shrink put together a file on me, had me sussed out and this was me – an alcoholic who was very anti-authority.

"The most humiliating thing was the Wednesday morning meet-the-chief session. It was a massive power trip for the consultant. He never knew any of the patients but once a week you'd be called in to see him and he'd go through your file. You'd be a jittering bundle of nerves all morning; you were afraid of what decisions he was going to make about you when he knew nothing about you except what was written on the file or what the other staff told him.

"It was like a magistrate's court with all the staff who wanted to learn the tricks of the shrink trade sitting in. He doesn't even know your name. He pulls out your file and flicks through it. 'Mmm, I see you are anti-authority and have an alcohol problem'. I said, 'You don't see or know anything.' 'Yes', he said, 'the file's correct, isn't it.' "

The staff objected when Susan built up a group of friends: "They didn't like it. You see, we were supporting one ▷

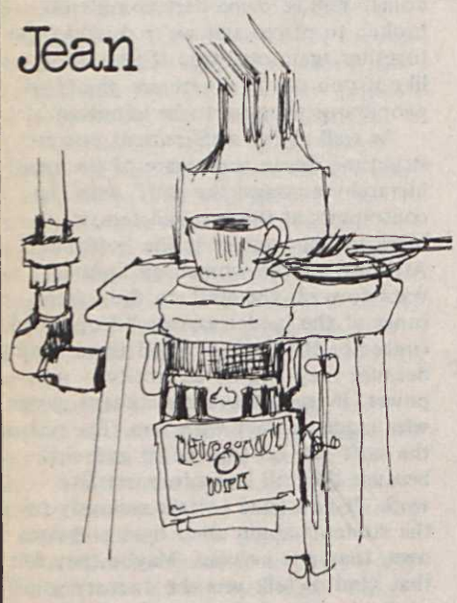
another. We'd go on strike; wouldn't go to Occupational Therapy, wouldn't go to bed when lights went out and wouldn't eat shitty food. I got dragged out of bed one day by one of my friend's shrink. He asked, 'What's the story with this little group?' He was very cool and trendy and actually treated me as if I had half a brain. It turned out that he was worse than my straight shrink – he just wanted to get into my knickers. I was just a fun fuck.

"I thought it was the screw of the century. It was me fucking the hospital, getting my own back, because it gave me a hold on him."O

It would have starved a Gnat –
To live so small as I –
And yet I was a living Child
With Food's necessity

The Heart asks Pleasure – First
And then – Excuse from Pain –
And then – those little Anodynes
That deaden suffering –

Jean



Nobody ever gave Jean any encouragement, nobody ever told her that she might be right. She was fifteen and trying to gain a measure of independence when she was forcibly committed.

She says, "I was having a lot of trouble parent-wise, getting to know them and things like that, but I didn't know them, I just hated their fucken' guts. You know, that's the way you are then." Maybe she was difficult, but maybe she had reason to be.

In the hospital she was forcibly restrained: tied down and drugged up.

Not once was she given an opportunity to feel responsible for herself. Its a pattern that's been repeated throughout her life – today she and her children are carefully supervised by a social worker.

When Jean was 16 her parents took her to the doctor who referred her to a psychiatrist. "He asked me a few questions, gave me an IQ test and an EEG, but he never told me directly what he thought about me. I got it all second hand through my mother.

"My parent's attitude towards me changed – 'Jean's not well', they'd say. But I wouldn't go in. They had to put an order on me – get a section on me to go in. In the end they came and carried me away.

"I was tied down, literally tied down so that I couldn't move. I just cried all the time and for two days I wouldn't eat a thing."

Like the other women, Jean objected to the way the staff treated her. "You were babied – they'd lock the knives and forks up after meals. And if you were good, you moved up the wards. You moved from a hospital ward with lots of beds to a building where you could come and go as you pleased. Then there was the 'loony bin', the part of the building where they put people who had been in all their lives. They were just like a sheep with their hair cut above their ears; the women wore pinnies and the men wore cloth caps and boots.

"The second time I was committed they put me in the 'loony bin'. I had taken an overdose. I was put into this cell and bathed in a hole in the floor. By the next morning they realised that I wasn't as far gone as they'd thought, so they put me in a ward.

"It was a huge ward. There were three rows of beds either side of the centre and beds all along the walls. It had a huge open fireplace, and down the hall were the padded cells. I used to get up at 5 o'clock otherwise it was impossible to get to the toilet – the floor would be completely covered with shit."

Jean went back to the hospital many years later with post-natal depression and found conditions considerably improved, though attitudes remained much the same. "I think most of the post-natal depression came from the fact that I had to go home to my parents with Peter – I didn't have anywhere to take him."

There was a baby ward in the hospital for the children whose mothers had post-natal depression and the hospital was supposed to encourage the mothers to take care of their babies, establishing a relationship with them. Jean met with quite the opposite attitude.

"They said I wasn't capable of looking after a child or being a mother – that I was wrong not to let him be adopted. I got the same from my parents.

"Most of the women in there were middle aged with lots of worries. I'd look at them and say to the doctor and people, 'It's not me who should be in here, it's my mother. This place is a fucking rest home – you're doing nothing for anybody – you're doing nothing for me. This is the kind of place my mother should be in after working for 20 years and getting done in by the old man.' Then they'd get really mad at me."

The fourth time Jean went into a mental hospital was after her husband had left her. "I knew what was coming, I knew that I was not going to be able to cope and that I was not going to be able to go out and get food for the kids and things like that. There was no alternative, they had to be put into care. I sussed it out pretty well beforehand but I think I made a mistake in letting them go into a children's home instead of trying to get foster parents."

She felt that the children's home ignored her wishes entirely as far as the children were concerned, and she found it quite difficult to reclaim the children once she was out again: "My social worker used to say, 'Oh, you can have them anytime,' but I knew I had to be very careful, I knew I had to be very together."O

Jill



"By the time you get to the fourth time in you begin to get a bit fatalistic about it. You think that's how your life is going to be all the time – just in and out of mental hospitals." At first Jill expected some miracle "cure" for her depression, after all she was "in hospital" and being "treated" by doctors. She submitted to sleep treatment and ECT but got increasingly depressed when they didn't cure her.

She felt that she was absorbing depression from the people around her. Occasionally she'd try and assert herself, but the hospital put a stop to that: "They used to take all my clothes away and lock them up so that I couldn't go out of the hospital."

Jill's memory was erased by ECT. "Some of it filters back after a while" – but her memories of her first stay in mental hospital are hazy.

"I was in my second year at university when the work got so much on top

of me that I just took an overdose. They sent me off to a mental hospital where I spent three weeks – terribly depressed. Back at college it all got worse and worse until I couldn't keep going. Finally my parents packed me off to hospital.

"I saw the doctor once a week for about seven minutes, otherwise there was no sort of working with our problems or anything like that. The nurses were so busy coping with meals and things that they had no time for you – to be fair, they were run off their feet.

"There was no group therapy, only occupational therapy which was absolutely dreadful. I remember sitting in this room when I was well enough to get up and 'do things' as they put it. Everybody was knitting string dishclothes and this woman said to me, 'Would you like to knit a dishcloth, dear?' I replied that no, I had no urge to knit a dishcloth, so she said, 'Then would you like to pull one out?' The patients who didn't want to knit could pull them out – and that was supposed to occupy your mind and rehabilitate you."

Susan and Jean were equally disparaging about occupational therapy. Susan said, "All the women sat around a table stuffing gonks. The men had a workshop. I thought, you can stuff your gonks and went into the workshop with the men, but there weren't any sharp tools and most of the men were just sort of hanging about. They made fun of me but I stuck it for a morning, pottering round with hammer and nails. I felt that stuffing ugly little cloth animals was really insulting to women. It was a slap in the face – like you weren't worth teaching a craft properly." Jean stuffed animals as well. "It was a howl." she says, "but mind you, I made some nice little things in there."

Jill was sent to a more modern hospital which provided group therapy. "At first I hated it. In a sort of way I wanted to hide the fact that I had problems. It was a bit off putting with loads of students there and student doctors. It was daunting to address yourself to a sea of people when you were feeling rotten. But I began to find the smaller groups, with one member of staff and seven or eight patients, quite helpful when I got to know people and began to trust them. You were never supposed to leave a group. People did at times but they were always persuaded to go back. I suppose they call it facing up to yourself."

Jill saw herself as a sick person who was going to be cured and when no miracle cure was forthcoming she became increasingly depressed. "It was desperation – I was never going to get better. I used to get suicidal, then they'd take my clothes away and lock them up so that I couldn't leave the hospital. It seemed a hopeless situation – one which I was never going to get out of."

Twice she was given sleep treatment. "Both times I felt a bit better. But the trouble is they give you a tremendous amount of drugs and it is hell coming off them when the treatment is finished."

Jill can't remember how she came to have ECT, all she knows is that her parents were not consulted. "I had a course of nine treatments and that didn't do any good so they gave me another six. We used to go along to one of the wards, get ready and lie in a long row of beds. After you'd been lying shaking for an hour, the anaesthetist would come along. He would start at one end and work his way up; somebody would follow him with the machine to give you ECT. You could hear it happening. As it approached you, you'd think, My God, it's coming to me, I'm the next one. Christ, I'm not going to go to sleep, I'm going to feel it. You could hear the whirr of the machine. Then you woke up with a crashing headache, feeling confused and bewildered. You couldn't remember what you'd done that morning, who you'd seen or anything. Honestly, the effects were worse than the depression. And it didn't wipe out any of the feelings – I just couldn't remember things like my brother's wedding.

"I used to worry that it would give me a brain tumour or something. The thing I objected to most was not being told anything about the treatment – having absolutely nothing explained to me."

Eventually Jill complained to her parents about the ECT. "The hospital tried to make out that I didn't know what I was talking about because I was so ill – but I never lost my reason. I always knew what was happening to me. My parents got a bit mad and confronted the doctor. He made all sorts of claims about how many times he'd seen me, how people spent time with me and what not. When I disagreed, he told my parents not to take any notice of me, 'Jill's not well, you see.' "O

In different ways the five women were trying to take responsibility for their lives –

– but in a world where women are expected to be passive and private, and where women themselves are led to believe that they will be protected by somebody else. Their attempts to be self directing created upheavals in their lives and broke down the closely knit fabric of their material security; their relationships blocked, they lost their jobs, their money ran out, they had nowhere to live and they were lonely. No one, let alone the women themselves, recognised that they were struggling against enormous odds. They saw themselves as failures – as failing to be productive, useful members of society.

They were frightened by their own unhappiness and conflicts. At first it was, for some of them, a relief to be labelled sick and hospitalised. "Illness has the advantage of relieving women of the guilt of unsanctioned incapacity and rage," writes Susan Lipschitz. But once inside they were faced with a bewildering contradiction. On the one hand they were seen as sick and therefore not responsible and beyond blame, but at the same time they were treated as guilty, difficult women who must "learn to think differently".

Society is intolerant and fearful of certain kinds of behaviour. There is no place in our culture – no religious or social structure – for individuals going through crises in their lives. There are no mirrors or myths in which they can recognise or understand their sufferings and confusions. Extremes of joy or despair find no validation. Capitalism offers to these individuals only one explanation for their state of mind – sickness, and proposes one solution – medical technology leading to "cure".

We are not arguing whether or not mental disturbance has a physiological basis or whether body and mind should be seen as separate. Here we are concerned with the attitude which the medical model (regarding disturbed people as ill) induces; the contradictions, the false expectations of the patients and the dishonesty of their helpers. Thomas Szasz[2] explains why psychiatry is dishonest in hiding behind supposed medical objectivity: psychiatrists are making moral judgements, he says, they are diagnosing behaviour as right *or* wrong*: "Is the scope of psychiatry the study and treatment of medical conditions or the study and influencing of social performance?" You can take out an appendix but you can't operate on a patient's entire life and social environment in hospital.*

There are groups fighting to change conditions in mental hospitals. Most believe that the conditions are a result of the present structure and the values of our society, and that they will change only with political change. But they are, nevertheless, campaigning to rid hospitals of existing abuses. ▷



Next month Frances Seton writes on psychotherapy

1. Susan Lipschitz **Women and psychiatry** *paper for the annual conference of the British Psychology Society, 1975.*
2. Thomas Szasz **Ideology and Insanity** *Pelican paperback.*
3. Phyllis Chesler **Women and Madness** *Allen Lane*

Cope
Self help alternative psychiatry group who have drawn up a mental health Charter raising ten crucial demands for patients rights. Available from the Mental Health Charter Working Group, c/o 111 Tavistock Crescent, London W11. Tel: 01-969 9790

"How To Cope With The Mental Health Act 1959 – A Practical Survival Manual" is a pamphlet produced by Cope which outlines the sections under which you can be forcibly held, how to resist, how to escape. Available from Cope, 15 Acklam Road, London W10. Tel: 01-969 9790. They also run encounter groups and one short-stay house.

Mental Patients Union
The union is open to anyone who has been or is a mental patient. They campaign for patients' rights, try to give people representation on Mental Health Tribunals and they form support groups inside hospitals. 37 Mayola Road, London E5. 01-986 5251

Women and Psychiatry Group
They are in the process of compiling a handbook intended to provide information about resources (and the lack of them), advise on possible alternatives and general rights. C/o Vicky Randall, Polytechnic of Central London, Room 708, Elsley Court, 10/2 Titchfield Street, London W1.

MIND
(The National Association for Mental Health). Keeps under review the general development of the mental health services and draws public attention to changing needs. Has a network of over 115 local mental health associations. Issue No.7 of their publication ***Mind Out*** *was on mental hospitals "from the receiving end". Available from 22 Harley Street, London W1. Tel: 01-637 0741.*

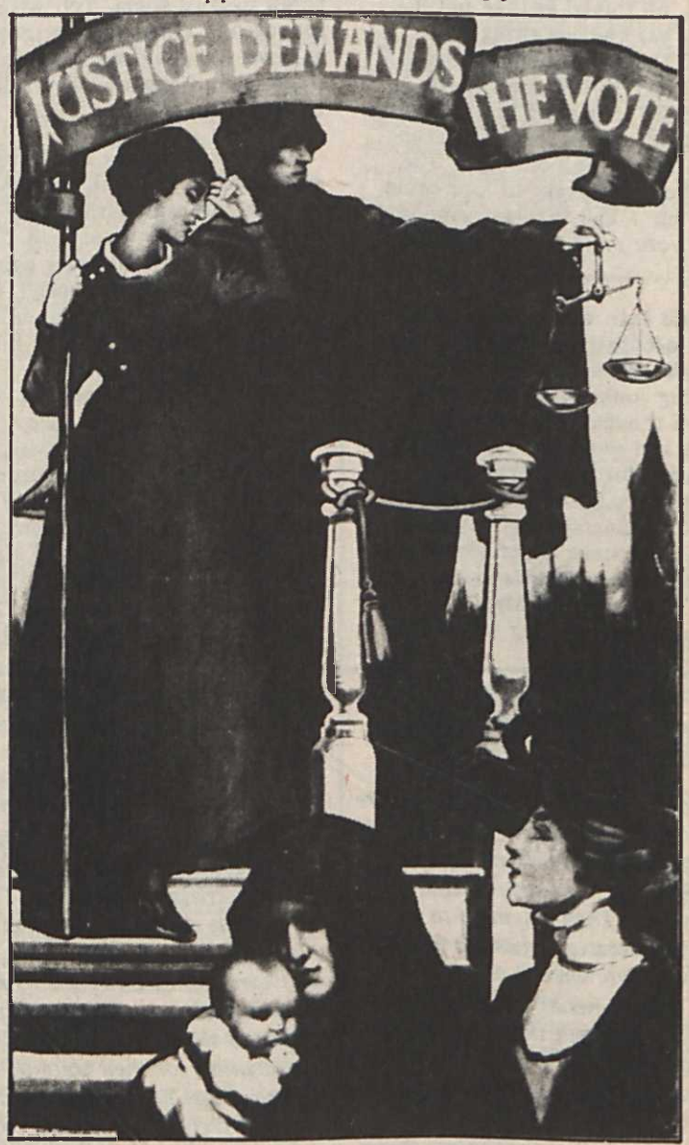


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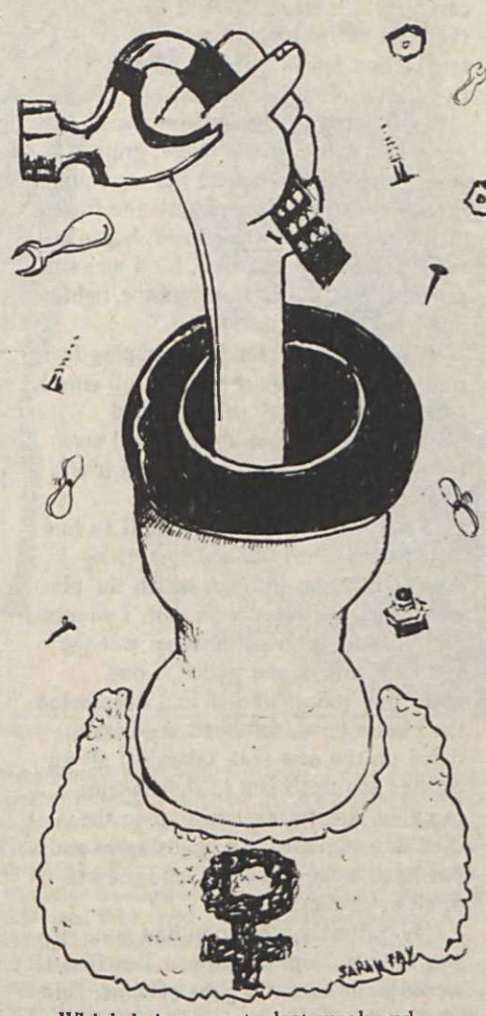
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UNIQUE OFFER

in the shit no more

a true story by Anya Bostock



The first thought that occurs to me as I start telling this story is: they'll say I'm a fool, spoilt, privileged, pretentious and moralising.

I've been in Women's Liberation for nearly four years and the "they" in my last sentence are other women. That tells you something for a start, about the movement or women in general or just about me, I'm not sure.

O.K., think what you like, I'll tell it anyway. It only happened last week-end. But you'll have to know some facts about me first.

I'm 51 years old, I'm self-supporting and always have been, I've brought up children and lived with men. The last of my men left a year ago. He was the one I cared about longest and when he left, it hurt.. I'm getting over it, now.

When I say I'm self-supporting it's true in the sense that I've always earned a reasonably good living, working at a desk. And I can cook and housekeep adequately (my children are healthy, which proves it I suppose) but not what you might call well. I can't make dresses and my cakes come out damp in the centre. When I lay the table, somebody (usually me) has to get up at least three times because something's missing.

So long as there was a man (and until a year ago there always was a man) those were the kind of shortcomings I was aware of in myself and used to worry about. You're a failure as a woman, I told myself on many occasions.

Since the man left, I've come to think that making dresses and cakes is maybe not all that important. Anyway I wouldn't have the time. It's amazing how busy it keeps you, being sole breadwinner and adult in a family of three.

What worries me nowadays is that I haven't a clue about how to do any of the man-type things. (Other than being the breadwinner, I mean). Electrical jobs, household repairs, putting up shelves. I've suddenly just realised that I just never have done any one of those things. Lots of women do them, I know, but I've always been a Mary not a Martha, and quite smug about it.

Which brings me to last week-end.

The lavatory seat in my flat is a black plastic job with a lid. The lid broke when we moved in eighteen months ago and the man stood on it to fix the light. He was going to replace it, only he left.

On Saturday afternoon I couldn't go out as I usually try to do (we live near the country and I like to walk) because my kids were home, sick. One had 'flu and the other was recovering after an accident. So I said to myself, right, you're going to do the ironing (piled up for a month) and you're also going to replace the lavatory seat. I bought a new one at the supermarket.

First I couldn't discover how or where the thing was fixed on. I pulled at the seat a bit and it wouldn't budge and I was no wiser than before. I asked Marcelline who lives upstairs. There's a flat bit behind the pan, she said, feel underneath and you'll find two screws. I did. They were quite hefty screws with wing nuts and the wing nuts wouldn't turn. Also, as soon as I touched them I got this brown stuff on my fingers. Rust, I thought, but it wasn't, it was shit.

As soon as I realised this I couldn't any longer do what I was already feeling tempted to do, namely, forget about the whole thing. Exposed shit in your lavatory is intolerable, it's part of being a failure as a woman, you can't just leave it there nor can you ask someone else to deal with it except perhaps your man if you happen to be on very good terms with him. I suppose I wouldn't be ashamed to tell the other women in my group about the exposed and ancient shit in my lavatory, but I would certainly not ask them to help me to remove it, they've enough troubles of their own. I had to do it myself. There was nothing else for it.

The lavatory is quite narrow and I'm a large woman. I knelt down and tried to get a grip on the nearest wing nut, wrapping a piece of rag round it. No good. I wiped my hands on the rag and went to look in the toolbox. It was in a mess and none of the tools in it looked as if they'd be any use.

In my work I deal with words. I know a lot of words, a lot of nouns and generally I know how to use them, but my idea of what objects those nouns actually represent is often vague. Gazing into the chaos of the toolbox I realised that, with the exception of hammer, screwdriver, saw and a very few others, I could not match any of the tool words I knew with the tools in the box, still less with the one which wasn't there and which I thought would probably do the trick. Are pliers this  or this ? And is this  a wrench? If so, I needed a wrench. By going back to the supermarket I'd avoid the embarrassment of having to ask. I went back to the supermarket (luckily it's next door to our block of flats), chose a  that looked strong enough, and also bought a small can of machine oil. The  had a hole at the end of its handle. I would put the screwdriver in the hole and twist it.

Back in the flat I filled a plastic bowl with water, found a few more rags, pushed up the sleeves of my sweater and set to work.

First I washed the screw with a rag soaked in water (a surprising amount of shit came away), then I squirted oil into it, then I fixed the –let's call it wrench ▶

to save time, even if it isn't – on to the wing of the nearest nut, then I thrust the screwdriver through the hole and began to push. The nut turned a tiny little bit, them jammed again. The wrench slipped off.

I repeated the process over and over again, and some of the times the nut turned a little. But because I had to keep reapplying the wrench, and the screwdriver was never in the same position as before, and I couldn't get my head near enough to see because of lack of space, I was never sure in which direction I ought to twist the screwdriver: I twisted it in a clockwise direction until it wouldn't turn any further, then back again as far as it would go, cursing myself for a fool, dropping this and that, going to fetch yet more rags, changing the water in the plastic bowl, getting very dirty and hot. All this was taking a long time, and the smell was strong.

The children came to the door and said, what on earth are you doing. Don't ask, I said, I'll tell you later, go away, please. They went back to bed.

After a while I thought I'd give that side a rest, and tried the other. Disconcertingly, this wing nut yielded quite soon. This is where I made my big mistake. Heady with success, I unscrewed the nut, pulled out the long screw which went through the hole in the flat bit behind the pan (larger pieces of shit than before, mixed with water and oil, fell on the floor and spattered the wall), and rattled again at the lavatory seat. To my surprise it came away almost at once.

Triumph? Yes, in a way. But the first screw was still there, with only a small, flat, square piece at the top. Now that the seat was no longer there to keep the screw from turning, I suddenly needed four hands. I only had two, covered in shit, slippery with oil and sore with twisting.

Ask one of the children for help? Just to put a pair of pliers (if they are pliers) on that flat square piece and immobilize the screw?

Why not?

Well, two reasons. One rational (they wouldn't like the shit), the other not. By now it had become extremely important that I should do this job entirely by myself, from start to finish.

I am a person who lives by anticipation. I am full of fears because I anticipate bad things, and this is a weakness. But I also have quite a developed capacity for anticipating good things ("looking forward") and this I know is a strength. Now that my life is not very safe or cosy and I have to clutch at straws, I try to make the most of this capacity, this strength. And I had certainly begun to look forward to the satisfaction I would feel if I finished this filthy job all my myself.

So. I fitted the wrench on the flat piece at the top of the screw, gripped it in my left hand, wrapped the rag round the nut and very slowly, with the fingers of my sore, aching right hand, began to twist it this way and that, for I was still not sure which direction was the right one.

It took hours, literally. Stopping from time to time to squirt in more oil (surely I used far too much oil but I had become superstitious about it; oil was my only friend). And in the end it was done.

But I would not allow myself to feel elated until I had washed everything down (the holes through which the pins went were encrusted with shit, I wrapped the screwdriver in yet another wet rag and jabbed it in and pulled it out, again and again), washed and disinfected the plastic bowl, scrubbed my hands, fitted on the new seat, taken off all my clothes and put them in the washing machine, washed my arms up to the shoulder, scrubbed my hands again and put hand cream on them, and dressed in clean clothes.

My Saturday afternoon had gone, it was time to think of supper. But first I would pour myself a glass of wine, light a cigarette and savour my elation. I'd done it! I had succeeded in doing something which previously I wouldn't even have attempted. It had turned out ten times more difficult and disgusting than I had imagined, and still I'd gone ahead and done it.

And it had been a man-type job. Cleaning up a small child with diarrhoea is something different. Doing something for another person is woman-type work, doing something to gain a secondary benefit (even like earning a living) is woman-type work. Men, I was taught, grapple with things just for the fun of getting the better of them, they pit themselves against mountains and machinery. My duel with the lavatory seat had been the nearest I'd got to pure sport in 51 years. My very own, private Olympiad.

Euphoria was beginning to set in, and I thought of the women in my group who are always warning me (and, I believe, warning themselves through me) against the tendency to euphorize. Some are irritated by it, others tolerate it because they are fond of me, but not one of them shares it. They are afraid euphoria will dilute their sense of purpose.

I know that there's nothing to celebrate about having to do all the woman-type jobs as well as the man-type ones. Liberation is a harsh-tasting fruit if it means sleeping alone, having no one to share your responsibilities or your rare moments of euphoria, racing against the clock all day, never having time to yourself, ageing prematurely, being dismissed by men (and women outside the movement) as a troublemaker, a bore, or, at best, a "character".

But, I thought, my dear sisters, I won't let you put me off feeling happy. As I'm not letting your imaginery criticisms stop me now from writing down the story of my battle. There isn't any lesson in what I'm telling you. Anyway I don't believe in lessons taught by one person to another, only in those we deduce ourselves from experience. But experience can and should be pooled.

I learned a number of things from that afternoon's experience:

(a) There's no mystery about using tools. Even a clumsy idiot like me can use them.

(b) There are no woman-type jobs or man-type jobs. There is a typical female attitude to work, which consists in minimizing any direct enjoyment that can be got out of it and emphasizing the indirect satisfaction to be derived from its usefulness; and a typical male attitude, which plays up the gratuitous pleasure ("creativity") for all it's worth and shies away from the secondary, ancillary aspect. Both sexes are capable of either attitude, and both attitudes are incomplete.

(c) My real friend in the struggle with the lavatory seat was not the oil, slippery and intrusive like all intermediaries, but the screw itself. I remember how, for a long time, I didn't know which way to turn the nut but kept twisting anyway, in both directions. Little by little the right direction asserted itself until presently the screw which had been there, getting progressively more encrusted ever since the block of flats was built (or since the beginning of time?), came loose and clear.

This is where you all start telling me not to be pretentious. But I'll say it all the same. I know I am not – we are not – out of the shit yet, not by a long way. Half the time we aren't even sure which way to push. But when we get to the end of it – for, like those bloody screws, it does have an end, I'm sure of it – I guarantee you a moment of elation before the next job clamours to be done.□

Anya Bostock is active in the Women's Liberation Movement in Switzerland.

THEATRE

BUZZ GOODBODY'S HAMLET
Roundhouse, London
January 14 – March 19



Mikel Lambert (Gertrude) and Ben Kingsley (Hamlet)

Buzz Goodbody's last production before her death in April 1975, a modern dress *Hamlet*, can be seen for a short season at the Roundhouse in London. I saw it at Stratford on Avon in the early autumn, in a theatre called The Other Place, just down the river from the more opulent Royal Shakespeare Theatre proper. It is a silver-painted corrugated iron covered shed, transformed from the days in the early sixties when it served as a milling, changing and props room for university theatre companies doing summer open-air productions on the river bank. The change in this building reflects a welcome development in the Royal Shakespeare Company's policy, of which Buzz Goodbody was a vital part: the bringing of great theatrical works to audiences in unalienating surroundings, at reasonable prices, and particularly presenting such work to schools, many of whom "do" Shakespeare as examination texts and get turned off for life.

Buzz Goodbody's work ranged across the gamut of theatre – from classic Shakespeare in the most prestigious of state-subsidised theatres in this country, to street theatre and agit-prop work, caught constantly in the contradictions of these two extremes. Unlike some of the purists, she did not dismiss the whole of bourgeois theatre and its history as decadent and useless, nor agit-prop as amateur and crude. Both extremes exist in the respective fields, and both in the end do violent disservice to the very different aesthetic and political values of each. While an inevitable conservatism dogs the path of successful commercial or subsidised theatre, an equally inevitable cavalier dismissal of any theatre which shows skill, professionalism and stability dogs the attitude of many people who believe that agit-prop theatre is the only viable political dramatic form. The latter seek to take theatre to audiences, to make the content relevant to political struggle, the form easily accessible. Yet in a necessary reaction against the hot-house middle class dominated commercial theatre (see Simon Gray for a horrendous example), the radical and revolutionary theatrical works of the past are pushed aside as irrelevant, and with them the recognition of the theatre as an industry with workers in it, as needful of struggle as any other workers.

This production of *Hamlet* is a challenge to such extreme views, both of left and right. It is a magnificent piece of work, avoiding completely the common modern interpretation of Hamlet as a man divided in himself between thought and action, always putting off the moment of avenging his father's death, not even able to decide whether to commit suicide and thus avoid life's problems. This production re-integrates Hamlet into his own time and milieu, showing him as an exceptional individual who is still subject to the movement of events around him, of which he is an active part.

Paradoxically, this is achieved by a fierce and immaculate modernity of dress, a production staged in white clarity, torch and auditorium lighting alternativ with full stage lighting. Discreet touches of ornateness are provided by the Japanese sliding screens at the back of the stage and the eighteenth century furniture used as rare props. Hamlet's customary suit of black is an elegantly cut three piece. The rest of the men similarly efficiently dressed: Claudius, the corrupt and murdering king, wears a pin-stripe; Polonius and Laertes wear diplomatic suits, and the motif is continued in the guards with their storm-trooper greatcoats and caps.

Although it is clear that we are watching a royal family, this secular modernism indicates that it is not a royalty which operates at a remote and secure distance; but one with a working head of state, in charge of political decisions (advised by Polonius, not played here as a doddering old fool, but as the shrewd diplomat whose advice rather than personality is out of date). It is implied that Claudius had Hamlet's father killed to seize political power, and with it Gertrude, Hamlet's mother. When Claudius first appears, he addresses the audience as though we were shareholders in a company meeting, and this mood achieves its fullest expression at the very end of the play, when the whole of the royal family, including Hamlet, is annihilated, and Fortinbras, the Norwegian military head, takes charge of Denmark on his imperialist sweep through Europe. He is sanctioned in this by Hamlet, who has understood that the days of royal power are over, and the age of imperialism is beginning.

In a world where economic power is determinant, we are shown clearly the role which class plays, and this is closely tied in to the way the production seeks to give a clearly rational basis to "madness" and the "supernatural". Ophelia rejects Hamlet, not because she or he is mad, but on Polonius' advice that he is a Prince and therefore out of her orbit. Hamlet's "madness" is a clear consequence of the situation he finds himself in – returning from university to his beloved father's funeral, finding his uncle has usurped his father's throne and his mother's bed. Hamlet is materially hemmed in; he has no concrete proof of Claudius' guilt, and finds himself isolated at the court in his suspicions. As the action unfolds, Hamlet, the intellectual, reveals himself to be a man who takes nothing at face value, nothing on trust, he is always trying to make distinctions between appearances (what "seems") and reality (what "is").

Hamlet's "madness" is simply the manifestation of his intellectual drive to make sense of what is going on around him, to get proof of what he only suspects. And his encounters with his father's ghost are an extension of this. Unlike the gullible and fearful guards and even his pragmatic friend Horatio, Hamlet willingly meets and talks to the ghost, hearing from it evidence of his uncle's guilt. He can meet the ghost without fear because he will explore any empirical fact, material of psychic, in order to understand it.

The production teases out the historical contradiction between the reactions of a seventeenth century and a twentieth century audience to the appearance of a ghost on stage. In a superb theatrical moment the ghost stands behind Hamlet, clasping his hands over the latter's head, and a past in which people could "believe" in the material existence of ghosts meshes with a present in which the ghost rises out of Hamlet's unconscious. As we watch, it becomes rational that a man in a black suit should be having a conversation with a ghost.

Hamlet's own need for rational and material proof is taken further in his use of the visiting Players' group to force Claudius to show signs of his guilt. The episode in the play, with its ornate and classical poetry, paradoxically reminds us of the most anti-establishment form of modern theatre – the agit-prop play, and again we have a historical meeting of past and present.

Hamlet's error, his "tragedy" is that he too shares some of the weaknesses of his class; as the former royal heir to the throne, he still believes that somehow it is his individual responsibility to change the course of Denmark's history. Thus, although of the entire milieu he is the most far-seeing, the most analytical, he is still constrained by religious doubts (on murder, suicide), has no access to real proof of Claudius' guilt. More important, he is himself a part of the family and house which is so corrupt, and it is from this that the values which finally destroy him spring. His analysis does not take him far enough: he adored his father, and believed in a virtuous monarchy. He can therefore not escape the fate of the rest of the family, and dies with it, but not before he has recognised the inevitability of Fortinbras' succession to the government of Denmark.

This doesn't make the play into a realistic, fatalist epic; the struggles and contradictions of the characters within it remains intense; the soliloquies, the imagery, the phrases which have become almost cliches in the English language, always spring from the action itself. The actors never give in to the music and rhythm of the verse as such, a style in vogue at the RSC in John Barton's days in the early 1960's; and again, the paradox is that in tying the imagery in with the ▶

communicative logic of the spoken sentence, the play's poetry is given its fullest impact.

It is deeply ironic that this should have been Buzz Goodbody's last play, with its disquisitions on, and rejection of suicide. I didn't know her at all well, and cannot begin to know or speculate on the reasons for her suicide, assuming that in such cases there is rarely a simple explanation. Those who were affected by her death will each draw their conclusions – the tributes from the establishment theatre which talk of the loss of a great talent are right, but it is also true that for the left, for socialist-feminists in their cultural struggles, any suicide is one suicide too many. For me one of the lessons is carried by Hamlet in the play – that we too should continue to see beyond what "seems", to what "is", in both the movement of each other's individual lives as well as in collective political struggle. And if that seems too abstract and righteous, then see the play, and see the message enacted in practice.

Michelene Wandor

BOOKS for children

HELPERS by Shirley Hughes (Bodley Head £1.95)

Teenager George is a friend of Mick, Jenny and Baby Sue's family and comes to look after them because "mother has to go out today". This is a very welcome children's picture book, with its bright and lively images of a young man involved in child care and housework and all the children helping each other to get through the day. The detail is clearly observed, detail that children themselves rejoice in, and the events of the day are realistic and relaxed. Shirley Hughes confirms herself in this book as the sympathetic and accurate observer of the world of small children that she showed in her first and very popular *Lucy and Tom's Day* (now in Puffin) and in it's sequel *Lucy and Tom go to School* (Gollancz, 1973).

But whereas *Lucy and Tom's Day*, first published in 1960, had unacceptable sexist features (e.g. Lucy aproned up at an early age and already in the sink), *Helpers* recognises that men, young and old, do look after children, that women do wear trousers and that our society is effectively multi-racial. That such a talented, prolific and established writer/illustrator has been prepared to relate to today's world is encouraging. To see how far she has come in 15 years you need only compare the park scenes in *Lucy and Tom's Day* and *Helpers*.

The picture at the end of *Helpers* of mum coming home in trouser suit, clogs plus Indian woven shoulder bag is refreshingly realistic, and yet, as in most of her books, the world depicted is one of space, and of middle class comforts. This is most evident in another recent Shirley Hughes picture book, *Sally's Secret* (1973) which, in addition, was too sexist for USA publication. But in *Helpers*, the "middle class-ness" is well compensated for by it's other virtues. It can be warmly recommended for small children and, of course, for playgroups, nurseries and infant schools.

Andrew Mann
(Childrens Rights Workshop)

GOING BACK by Penelope Lively (Heinemann £2.10)

Jane, now adult, revisits her Somerset home, and memories of her childhood there during the war-time years with her brother Edward, flood back. At first sight the novel appears to be little more than a competent evocation of an idyllic and privileged childhood spent in the large rambling country house with large exciting garden that features in so much children's fiction.

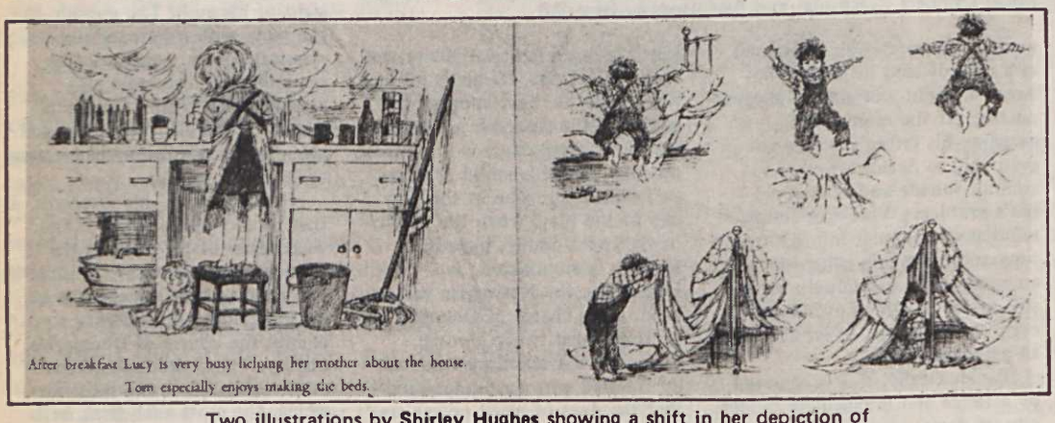
But its worth struggling through the scene-setting. The novel's importance lies in its committed depiction of the pressures that society puts on boys to be "manly". We see the much-tormented Edward through the eyes of his loving sister Jane, who is powerless to help him against their aloof officer father. Edward tries to fight the rigid decrees of his insensitive father, who brands him as a "cissy" for playing the violin and is determined to knock him into shape by packing him off to public school.

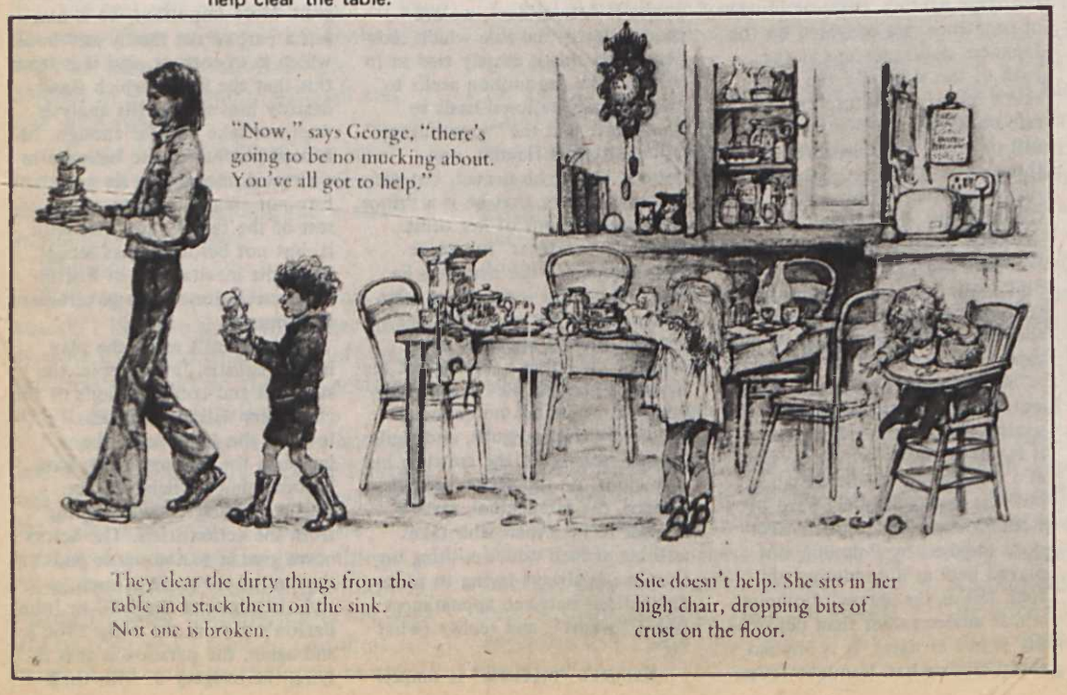
Lively's portrait of Edward – who cries when he scrapes his knee, who attempts with Jane to knit balaclava helmets for the war effort, who hates playing dive-bombers with the boys – is a rare and sensitive one of a boy growing up, as much a prey to emotions and fears as his sister.

Mike, the conscientious objector who moves into the household for a time, provides Edward with an alternative model of "manliness" from that provided by his father. Lively gives a sharp picture too of the class distinctions which inevitably shape Edward's choices.

But there can be no escape – Mike cannot resist the pressures and he enlists, and Edward is later to be killed when on national service in the Korean war. For eight-year-olds and upwards.

Rosemary Stones
(Childrens Rights Workshop)





Two illustrations by Shirley Hughes showing a shift in her depiction of sex roles. *Above,* Lucy is training for domesticity while Tom messes about. *Below,* 15 years later, teenager George babysits and gets Mick to help clear the table.

FILMS

THE ROMANTIC ENGLISHWOMAN directed by Joseph Losey on General Release from end of January

Elizabeth Fielding played by Glenda Jackson can afford a lone introspective trip to Baden Baden thanks to her writer husband's earnings and the au pair girl who looks after their son. In Germany Elizabeth meets the third angle of her marital triangle to be – Helmut Berger equipped with Yves St Laurent suits and a slightly sulky air of mystery.

It's an easy film to mock. Most critics have dismissed it as pretty packaging neatly tied up with Tom Stoppard's dialogue. "Station bookstall fantasy" wrote Russell Davies, but maybe marriage breeds station bookstall fantasy. Margaret Drabble was not only bored but infuriated by the film. The discontented housewife is a serious theme, she said, and it's trivialised



Glenda Jackson (Elizabeth) and Helmut Berger (Thomas)

by *The Romantic Englishwoman* with its opulence, cliches and pale imitations of earlier films by Losey.

I disagree. In between the conservatory and the Bentley, the film throws certain aspects of marriage and the fantasies it feeds into painfully sharp relief. Moreover, the welter of possessions surrounding the couple emphasises the wife's status as possession. When Glenda Jackson finally takes off with Helmut Berger, Michael Caine as Lewis Fielding is incapacitated, "I can't work", he says, "unless everything is in its place." "Its??" says his listening Liberated Lady Journalist.

Superficially, Glenda Jackson is hardly a picture of subjugated womanhood. She strides assertively across the set with the queenly aura of her past roles, and as Elizabeth Fielding she is provided with a ready supply of repartee. But it's her suggested strength which makes her ultimate dependence on Michael Caine incongruous.

Michael Caine, jealous and suffering, is equally dependent on her but his dependence is shown to be positive. She enables him to be satisfyingly productive. He pays for his dependence in cash. She pays for hers with caring.

It's a comfortable dependence, but Elizabeth finally loses touch with her own needs. She fails to discover what she wants in Baden Baden. When she returns Caine asks her, "Are you discontented?" "I would be," she replies, "but I don't feel I have the right." (He takes her comment for the script he is writing around their situation.) We see her attempting to assert herself, to find what she wants, with little childish acts of rebellion like travelling by air when her husband forbids it.

Helmut Berger precipitates her into action because through him she recognizes a want – she wants him. With Helmut Berger she can feel self directing. She's his equal if not his superior; he's a gigolo, a thief and like her lives off the needs of the other sex. It's an ugly little role reversal. She can take charge – *she* takes *him* out to dinner, though the only place they can go is where her husband has an account. (The freedom that money can buy is bounded by her wedding ring.) As in many relationships the balance of power is maintained by mystery and "otherness"; Helmut Berger remains adequately ambiguous and distanced to keep her respect and to feed her fantasies. She struggles coquettishly for his approval.

After they run away together, the Liberated Journalist looks in on the deserted husband, and gives her view as to why Elizabeth left him for Thomas (Berger): "Thomas is freedom and that's sexy." Their relationship is not so much free as carefree, empty of obligation and day-to-day demands. Elizabeth abandons the role of responsible wife and mother for that of the gay abandoned mistress.

Glenda Jackson is not given a chance to confront the implication of her romantic fantasy of a free relationship. Instead the film suddenly veers off into the stuff of male dreams – car chases, drug smuggling.

Throughout there is a curious ambivalence at concentrating on a woman's experience. An anxiety apparently justified in the light of the fact that so few spectators could take Elizabeth Fielding's conflicts seriously. At one point▶

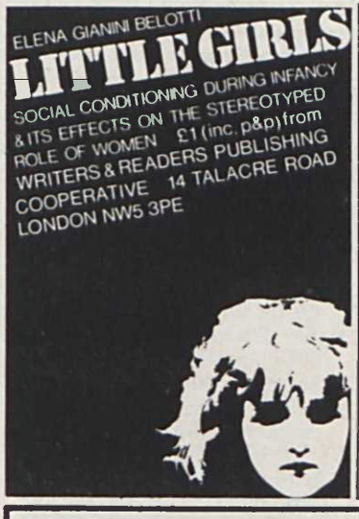
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reviews

Michael Caine turns on the Liberated Journalist telling her that she's boring, boring, boring. Everyone agrees with her, he says, she's just flogging a dead horse, applying her ideas to everything indiscriminately and behaving as if she's made one of the key discoveries about humanity. As a writer he defensively rejects as boring the idea of a script about a woman's search for identity – he insists on writing a thriller instead. Yet his script ends up by being about his wife's search for herself. His fantasies, and her fantasies weave together in a complex fashion.

And the resolution to all this complexity? He says to her, "Come home with me." "Why?" she asks. "Because I love you", he replies. The status quo is uncomfortably restored. And the audience is left to either examine for themselves the aspects of marriage, romantic love and role reversal which the film gingerly picked up, or to dismiss the whole thing as "pulp novel fantasy", depending on their own preoccupations.

Ruth Reckless



CONNOISSEUR FILMS

Carol Kane in HESTER STREET, Academy One, London

Set in a 1890's New York Jewish community, Joan Micklin Silver's film attempts to show the problems faced by a newly-arrived Russian Jewish wife. Confronted with a husband who is embarrassed by her presence and a new life-style she doesn't understand, she makes several humiliating efforts to save the relationship but finally divorces him and starts a new life.

Susan Lambert

MUSIC

ALBUMS

'Rich Man's Woman's is the title of **Elkie Brooks'** solo debut on A&M Records. Of the nine tracks, five are self-penned and there's also her version of 'He's A Rebel', the old Crystals hit, written by Gene Pitney. Elkie Brooks says, "To be a woman in this business you've got to be very positive and have an incredible personality, twice as much as a guy. It's so easy for a woman singer to fall into the nice-lady bag. I like to think of myself not necessarily as aggressive on stage, but as strong and sure of myself. I hope to come over the same way on record." But isn't the effort of cultivating and the strain of maintaining "an incredible personality" as much a trap as "the nice-lady bag"? However this album *will* establish her firmly as a solo artist. Though one of the two tracks she sang on 'Flash Fearless Versus the Zorg Women, Parts 5 & 6' (Chysalis) entitled 'Sacrifice' still remains my favourite Elkie Brooks recording.

Two more women with albums on A&M (they've got a lot of women on their label) are **Rita Coolidge**, with a release entitled 'It's Only Love' and a quick mention/strong recommendation of an album which has been out for a year but I've only recently come across – **Phoebe Snow.** Beautifully produced and executed, her songs have a relaxing blues-come-Van Morrison feel and her voice really is excellent.

Other albums available: **Patti Smith** 'Horses' (Arista, Import), **Carla Bley/Mike Mantler** '3/4;13' (Watt 3), **Shusha** 'Before The Deluge' (United Artists), **Joni Mitchell** 'The Hissing Of Summer Lawns' (Asylum) and **Carly Simon's** 'Best Of . . .' both released on December 5th. Unable to get a copy of Joni Mitchell's album before we went to press, it's her first studio recording since 'Court And Spark' and will be reviewed in a future issue.

Frankie Armstrong's material on 'Songs And Ballads' (Topic) spans nearly two centuries. She has selected traditional songs telling of people's experiences at work, within the family, of prostitution, drug addiction, marriage, murder and adventure. She includes a song co-written with Ewan MacColl, 'Lament For the Hull Trawlers' about the loss of three British trawlers off the coast of Iceland in 1968. "Many of us, including myself, had been ignorant till then of the appalling conditions in which trawlermen worked, and it was largely as a result of the protests of the fishermen's wives and mothers that the public was made aware. I just happened to be singing in Hull and Grimsby at the time, so I tried to capture some of my feelings in song."



Carly Simon

Three to mention from Warner Bros: **Bonnie Raitt's** 'Home Plate', **Dionne Warwick's** 'Track Of The Cat' and **Ronee Blakley's** 'Welcome', all released 28th November. Blakley played the part of Barbara Jean in Robert Altman's film 'Nashville' – though this is not a sudden departure into the music field. She has been composing for six years and released one album already, this one contains twelve originals. **Emmylou Harris,** whose recent one-off concert at the New Victoria, London, received unanimous (if somewhat patronising) acclaim from the music press, had an LP 'Pieces Of The Sky' (Warner /Reprise) issued some time ago. If you like country music – or even if you don't – its a beautiful combination of a pure voice, sensitive arrangements and tasteful musicianship. She is apparently returning for a tour Jan/Feb, which will coincide with the release of her next LP, entitled 'Elite Hotel'. Finally, **Sharon Forrester's** LP 'Sharon' originally issued in '74 via B&C Records (which collapsed a while ago) has been re-released on a new label – Vulcan (distributed by Phonogram). Vulcan will deal specifically with reggae and West Indian music.

NEWS

Joan Armatrading and A&M Records are working very hard. Between August and November she played 105 shows in 108 days, perhaps *now* she will gain some long-deserved recognition. A&M have released another single 'Dry Land' from her 'Back To The Night' album and she has written enough material for a third LP. **Dory Previn** has just finished her next album, planned for release mid '76, titled 'Children Of Coincidence' (Warners).

Jackie De Shannon, performer since the '60s, composer of hits for people like the Searchers, Marianne Faithful and Brenda Lee has just released her *21st* album 'New Arrangement' (CBS). Her return to performing in the States has gained her much praise, and in the future she will be producing country artist Nancy Wayne. A press release quotes her as saying, "I walked in to Studio Instrumental Rentals and there were Evie Sands, Linda Ronstadt, Melissa Manchester and Harriet Schock – for once a group of women doing it for themselves." (How come we never hear the results of these sessions?)

" . . . she is utterly professional and totally sincere; a singer who gives of her all and who cuts through the glamour and gloss which take so much away from other singers. When you talk about the First Lady of Country Music – you're talking about one person and that's Tammy Wynette." (CBS Epic press release). For the reality read last month's *Spare Rib.*

Ladytruckers is an all-woman company which provides a road and stage management service for bands. Having worked with several named bands, they seem to be attracting both attention and business. Occupational hazards include being refused service in transport cafes or mistaken for concert groupies. But is it possible to take a roadie seriously if she's dressed in a pink T-shirt, denim shorts, black boots and tights? Even with a Heavy Goods Vehicle license and a seven ton truck in tow. Eventually Ladytruckers hope to incorporate a number of all-female road crews, including lighting technicians, sound engineers, stage designers and work both in Britain and America. Anyone interested call Brandy Young 01-624 4123.

There seems to be an increasing number of women musicians and singers in bands, on tours and in the recording studio. Dylan is currently working with Scarlet Rivera (violin), Ronee Blakley and Joan Baez (vocals/guitar); the Cat Stevens tour includes female vocal trio; Fleetwood Mac, in addition to Christine McVie (keyboards/vocals) now has vocalist Stevie Nicks, who also co-writes their material. Curved Air, who recently released their first studio LP for three years, 'Midnight Wire' (BTM Records) still features founder member Sonja Kristina (vocals/keyboards). Carla Bley who played with the Jack Bruce Band last year is now recording her next album with Robert Wyatt.

Around London: Lady June (poetess) recently combined music/theatre, gigging with Lol Coxhill and others. Foxy Lady, Carol Grimes' Band and Witches Brew – all bands featuring women musicians can be seen on the pub circuit. **Finally,** Mother Superior, an all-woman band, are really worth trying to see, in addition to playing the pubs, their gigs go as far afield as Fishguard, Wales.

Marion Fudger

Daughters Inc. An American feminist publisher. Next month we plan to review all the Daughters Inc. books available in this country.



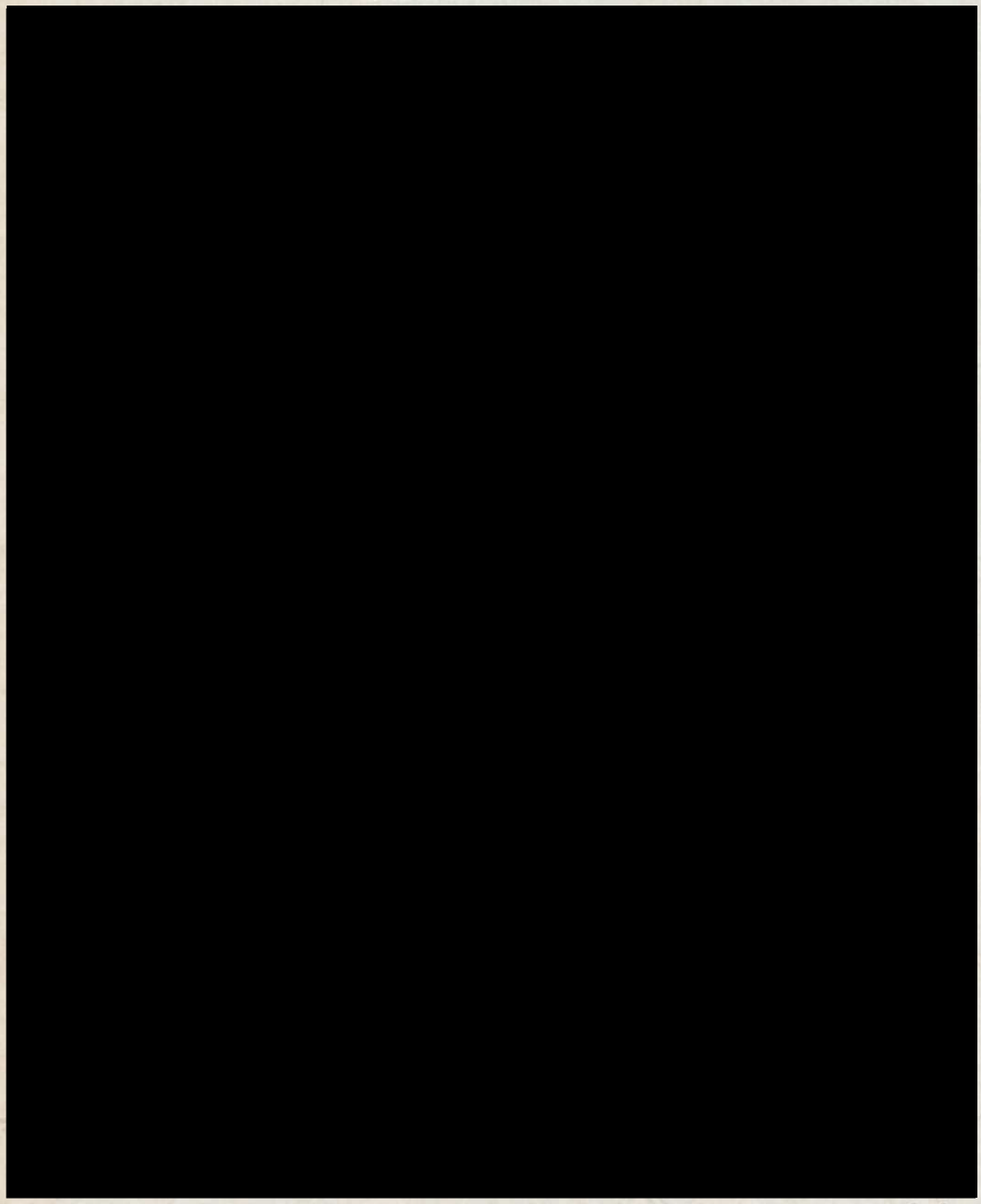
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TOPIC

CONNOISSEUR FILMS

Secret Gardens

"It has always been accepted that men have sexual thoughts and fantasies, but it was taboo for women."



Nancy Friday's book *My Secret Garden*, published in October by Virago, is an anthology of women's erotic fantasies. She collected some through interviews, some in response to ads she placed in magazines: "Female sexual fantasies – wanted by serious female researcher." They cover a prolific and richly varied range of topics featuring zoos, harems, filmstars, mothers and fathers, dogs and donkeys.

Attacked as pornography, a best seller in America, **Nancy Friday** sees this exploration of fantasy as an important step for women in validating their own sexuality. She discusses this with **Eleanor Stephens**, explaining how she came to write the book and how it has been received.



Nancy Friday

★ It's hard to believe now but the truth is that when I first thought of the idea I never believed it was going to be such a shocker, such a sensational book. Back in 1969 everyone was suddenly interested in women: what's it like to be a woman? What goes on in women's minds? It was like we were a continent that had just been discovered. I had sexual fantasies and I'd never read anything about the subject so I thought that it would be interesting to put together a collection of women's fantasies.

I little expected that when you go out and ask women whether they have sexual fantasies, most say that they do not. Now they aren't exactly lying. Even today at a lunch party the women there said, 'Yes, it's interesting but I don't have sexual fantasies myself.' I'm not proselytizing or trying to convince women that they do, but I happen to think we all do. I believe very sincerely that men and women all do have sexual fantasies, except for a very few people, like those very few who don't remember their dreams. If you're a sexual person you're going to have sexual thoughts, that's all it is. It's the term 'fantasy' that puts people off; it's such a technicolour word, it suggests casts of thousands. Eventually when people start to talk to me they say, 'Well, I never would call it a fantasy, it's just thoughts I have.' That's what fantasies are; there's no other word, except maybe daydreams or mental images.

It's hard to get women to talk about their fantasies because they are so out of keeping with their everyday life. What they do and feel in their fantasies they would never do as 'nice girls' or 'nice women' in reality. But that's fine because you're not meant to do those things you fantasise about; fantasies are not suppressed wishes. Women are afraid of their fantasies, thinking: Good God, that means I really lust after my father. But fantasies are not meant to be acted out, they're wonderful to think about but most women would say, 'No thanks, I don't really want three black men, a dwarf and a dog.' Not tonight anyway ...

So there was a lot of difficulty getting the idea accepted, people were excited by it at first and then threatened. I had the same problems collecting the material that I had later in getting it published. It was too hot to handle, I guess. At first I made the mistake of thinking it would be interesting to discuss this with women when their lovers or husbands were around. I thought this would be helpful. What I found was that when the women began to be interested, they might say, 'Yes, now I think about it, I do . . .' the lover would be shocked and interrupt, 'Why Harriet, you don't mean you have thoughts like that, when you're with me!' Then the women would mumble apologetically and deny it. So I quickly realised that men don't want to hear about it and they should-

n't have to. Sexual fantasies aren't for telling out loud. For me and most women part of the excitement of it is that it's private. The important point is for a woman to accept her fantasies without guilt and to accept that we do have this other dimension of sexuality. It's a good thing to feel about yourself, it shows that you are sexually alive. Just because you can't express these thoughts, doesn't mean they aren't healthy. Like the emotions that are expressed in dreams at night, they do terrific psychological work for us and if you're deprived of this you go round the bend. People need this release.


Eleanor Stephens

You imply that the new consciousness of women which developed out of the women's movement has influenced your ideas, and helped people to accept this aspect of women's sexuality. Is this so?

* Oh, yes, it helped terrifically. In 1970 and especially 1971 everything changed overnight. Women suddenly realised that we could learn a great deal about ourselves from other women. It wasn't men who had the clue to who and how we were, as we'd always been led to think, it was other women who could really tell you about yourself – how it feels to be a woman – and help you to explore your own potential. A man can be supportive but he can't tell you, that's enormously important. I give a great deal of gratitude to what began in those years.

Don't you think there is a danger in equating sexual liberation with women's liberation? A lot of women feel that the movement towards sexual liberation, so called, is a male-defined notion which puts pressures on women to perform sexually.

* Yes, I know what you're saying and it is a problem. I suppose I do firmly believe that any movement that genuinely liberates women will mean liberation for men too. This still hasn't got across to most men yet, which is unfortunate. Women have changed and men have not. That's why there is so much anger about, why women are angry and men are puzzled and digging in their heels. It's a difficult time to be a man: it's a difficult and fascinating time to be a woman. Right now we are the active ones and men are on the receiving end. I wish men would be more active in terms of initiating change and trying out different ways to be opposite women. I'm sure this will come and I'm very optimistic about the outcome of the present 'sexual crisis'.

A terrible book came out last year called *Sexual Suicide.*

Yes, it received some publicity here a few weeks ago.

* That's too bad. I did a talk show with the author; he believes that unless women go back to their traditional roles as mothers and all that, men will turn into brutes who bust into Harrods to beat up old ladies, and masturbate over copies of *Playboy*. The point is that even if he's right, and we believe he's wrong of course, this is one case where you really can't turn back the hands. You can't now tell women to unknow what they have found out about themselves. It's not just a question of changing roles or a style of living, it's a matter of unlearning and unfeeling what you now know is right. The reason I always think the women's revolution took off at the speed of light is that there is such fairness in it. Who could really object to something so right?

After *Secret Garden* came out I was doing some college lecturing. I was so discouraged when I visited the mid-West, middle America, and I met girls there who were at college for the same old reason: to get a ring on their fingers. They'd say to me, 'Oh, nothing's really changed out here you know. I want just what my mother had.' Then I'd realise and tell them, 'Look, maybe you're gonna do what your mother did but there's an incredible difference because you have options your mother never had. You may not choose to act on them, but baby, you've got them.' That's what's changed.

You say in your book that it isn't your intention to analyse women's fantasies, you don't want to play amateur shrink, and I accept this. But it seems to me that if I had done this piece of work, my ideas about female sexuality would have been changed, things would have surprised me . . .

* Look, I wanted to talk about so many things. It's easy to say this after the event but it is indeed true. I wrote the book over here in England and maybe if I'd been in New York it would have been different and I would have written more of my own ideas. But I didn't really find anyone here who would talk to me about it so I felt the main point was just to document the fact that these things exist. With some encouragement I would have loved to have written much more. I sent in the first draft with reams of my questions and comments but they just printed it as it stood. Still, I agree with you and it is my major unhappiness with the book and a reason I'm doing a follow-up.

Yes, it's disappointing because although the material, the women's letters and interviews, is fascinating, I'm left with the feeling that you've copped out of your responsibility.

* Yes, but in my own defence you must look at this historically. No one much wanted the book at first, it made people, publishers, very anxious. It still does and I don't fully understand why. Why did the BBC cancel my interview the day I'm on the aeroplane over?

But it sold so well in the States and you say you've received so many grateful letters from readers.

* Yes, now it's out that's true. Of course it's nice to make money from it, and I'll say that, but the ongoing reward is the mail I get daily from women. Women who give their names and addresses because they want me to know who they are and how grateful they are to realise that they're not alone, sexual freaks, in having sexual fantasies.

It seems to me that the fantasies represented in your book fall roughly into two categories, and fulfil different functions. Some women seem to have a satisfactory sexual situation and use fantasy to enhance this, to add excitement; but quite a large number use fantasy to compensate for what they describe as a basically unhappy and unsatisfying reality which they can't or don't wish to change. The reservation I have about your position – that it is automatically good and healthy to fantasise once guilt is abolished – concerns this second group. What about women who are using fantasy, as a way of avoiding confronting the reality of their own situations and relationships?

* Yes, I think it's true that fantasy can take the place of something missing. (That wouldn't apply when you're masturbating, masturbation and fantasy go hand in hand.) Now it's all very well saying, if your sex life is bad, change it instead of fantasising. First, this book is not a 'How To' book. I wouldn't know, nor do most psychiatrists and sex therapists, how to get people to ask for what they want sexually. It seems to be especially hard to ask for this from the person you're closest to, it's easier to tell a stranger. If you are indeed using fantasy to take the place of something missing, better that than nothing at all, and, yes, better still to go out and make changes. But that's what we're all about, right? Now I think *Secret Garden* does do this to some degree and you would see from all the letters I receive that women certainly are beginning to take more responsibility for their sexuality. To do this you need self-confidence and courage, and this can begin by knowing you're not the only one. We come back to this response all the time: 'Thank God I'm not the only one.' When you stop feeling so isolated, you can begin to make changes. Maybe leave the relationship that dissatisfies you and start a new one, or tell the partner you're with: 'I don't like it that way, let's do this.'

Yes, that's what's exciting but we don't know any of that from reading your book. I was interested in knowing how the acceptance of fantasy feeds back into the reality of those women's lives. Of course you don't have that information.

* No, not for those particular women but from the letters of other women you can see how affected they were by the material. But I give all credit to the original group who wrote in because it▶

Secret Gardens

was a brand new field surrounded by guilt. They really took a risk even thinking about this, let alone writing it down. It has always been accepted and expected that men have sexual thoughts and fantasies, but it was taboo for women.

Yes, I did my own poll among some friends and most did say, 'No, I don't have sexual fantasies, I'm too busy.'

* How can you be too busy – you can think about sex and fantasise while you're doing three other things – the mind is wonderfully complex in that way. Fantasising doesn't imply you drop everything else. It can happen while walking down the street, whatever. But often women are insulted by the question. They say to me, 'Listen baby, I don't need a sexual fantasy, I've got this terrific lover, I live mine.' But they've got it all wrong. You can have both, they're different dimensions.

I gather you're doing a book on male sexual fantasies.

* Yes, I received many letters from men who'd read the women's stuff and I've been impressed by these. They don't need to write to me to impress me with all their macho bullshit. One major difference is that most men don't have the same guilt so they don't need these devices of force or rape or anonymity, ways of masking their own desire for sexual pleasure. But of course the richness and variety of the women's fantasies is related to the taboos, often childhood taboos. Guilt itself can be a terrific turn-on. My fantasies certainly use guilt and the thrill of the forbidden. They take place in semi-public places where there's the fear and excitement of being discovered.

After reading material by men, I still feel that women's fantasies are much more adventurous than men's and one reason for this is that women's real sexual lives are so bare, if not barren. So the fantasies have more to make up for. And both sexes have access to the same material – books, films, – to build on. Women know all about sex, but they don't get to live it. And women are imaginatively trained more than men. That's part of the traditional female role. And perhaps women had more time to dream and exercise their imaginations, before they went on the job market. I don't think men in general have much imagination. Look at sex, so many men – and I'm not knocking men, it's cultural not biological – haven't changed their sexual patterns since the first fuck. That's really sad. And women haven't had the nerve to confront them, to challenge them.

Yes, I wish you'd talked about this in your book.

* I wish we'd had this talk then and I would have! Because I do firmly believe that there comes a time when women have to take their own sexual life in their hands, and not expect men to play them like a violin.□



MAURÉEN DUFF

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